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Graduate Market Trends

Winter 2016

IN THIS ISSUE

NUS: STUDENTS AT THE HEART OF HE POLICY

UNIVERSITY-BUSINESS COLLABORATION AND GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY

SECTOR OPINION

MASTERS GRADUATES IN THE UK LABOUR MARKET

PROGRESSION OF COLLEGE LEARNERS TO HE

ENGAGING STEM EMPLOYERS

STUDENT SERVICES AND TEACHING EXCELLENCE

IN THIS ISSUE

3 News in brief

6 University-business collaboration and graduate employability

With Aaron Porter, Director of External Affairs, NCUB

10 Masters graduates and the UK labour market

Charlie Ball, Head of HE Intelligence, Prospects

14 Progression of college learners to HE

Andrew Jones, Deputy Director, Linking London

4 NUS: Students at the heart of HE policy

With Sorana Vieru, Vice President (HE), NUS

8 The short goodbye

With Brian Hipkin, Vice Chair, AMOSSHE and author

16 Engaging STEM employers

Matt Robinson, Data Analyst, University Alliance

Jacqueline Gray, Industrial Liaison Officer, University of Lincoln

18 Student services and teaching excellence

Ben Lewis, Chair, AMOSSHE

Note from the editor



Commissioning and editing Graduate Market Trends is a tremendous pleasure (the word 'job' hardly does justice to the Editor's role!) and each edition reminds me just how many diverse and interesting voices there are in our sector. Stimulating, insightful and expert – such are the qualities of our contributors and this, the Winter 2016 edition of GMT, is no exception.

As 2015 exited the stage, it occurred to me that the publication of the Green Paper for HE would make a fitting final scene, although in truth this was no dramatic climax but rather the continuation of an all too familiar narrative.

For this reason I have included two interview pieces written at the time of the Paper's launch with two individuals who have the NUS in their blood: Sorana Vieru, current NUS Vice President for HE, and Aaron Porter, HE consultant and Director of External Affairs at NCUB, who of course held the NUS presidency at a critical time. Our regular columnist Brian Hipkin delves into his heart and soul for a fitting farewell to his last full-time post in HE – although thankfully the farewell is not meant for us or indeed the sector!

Brian delivers a richly personal account of the sheer power of higher education.

In a GMT research exclusive, Charlie Ball, Head of HE intelligence at Prospects and a leading expert in graduate LMI, examines the latest outcomes for UK-domiciled Masters graduates six months after graduation and paints a fascinating picture of a Masters-specific labour market.

Linking London's Deputy Director and IAG expert Andrew Jones follows with the findings of research into FE-to-HE progressions which confirm the

importance of colleges in harnessing social mobility.

I am delighted to include two contributions by authors in organisations with whom we are proud to have strong connections. Colleagues from the University Alliance give us a flavour of how universities engage with employers in STEM provision followed by a think-piece from AMOSSHE's Chair Ben Lewis on how the Teaching Excellence Framework will affect student services in the years to come. This truly wraps the edition up in green paper.

Finally, I am pleased to include our first ICeGS update which you can find on the back cover.

I hope you enjoy reading this first edition of a new and no doubt exciting year!

Aphrodite Papadatou
GMT Editor

NEWS IN BRIEF

- **High Fliers 2015:** The latest annual survey reports that the UK's leading employers are 'fighting it out' for a handful of top candidates as the graduate jobs market continues to improve. The report found that about 1,000 graduates turned down job offers at the last minute, leaving employers searching for replacements in 2015. Find out more at www.highfliers.co.uk
- **Life Chances Strategy 2016:** The Prime Minister, David Cameron, outlined a number of key measures covering early years, young people, mental health and social opportunity in a speech signalling the build-up to the government's Life Chances Strategy due to be launched later this spring. You can access the speech at www.gov.uk
- **HESA data:** In January the latest data set covering 2014/15 was published and showed a slight (1%) decrease in enrolments, a larger (3%) drop in non-EU students and a (2%) increase in the number of graduates awarded a 1st or 2:1. Find the stats at www.hesa.ac.uk
- **Employability Survey:** Ofsted is calling for views on how far schools work with employers on preparing young people with appropriate enterprise and employability skills for a report due to be published in the summer term. We would also urge you to partake! www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/Enterprise_Employability_and_Employer_Engagement
- **Social Market Foundation (SMF):** In January the think tank launched a year-long Commission on Inequality in Education with a speech by Commission Chair Nick Clegg and a report outlining some of the data on education inequality over recent years. Find out more at www.smf.co.uk
- **FE challenges:** Will Martin on the TES FE website listed nine challenges facing the sector in the coming year with area reviews, the apprenticeship levy, skills devolution and the position of Sixth Form Colleges prominent among them. View Will's challenges and more at www.tes.com
- **UCAS:** New study shows that the gender gap in UK degree subjects has doubled in eight years. Women now outnumber men in almost two-thirds of degree subjects, and the gender gap in British universities has almost doubled in size since 2007. The statistics, published by the university admissions service, show that men still dominate in areas traditionally seen as male, such as engineering and some sciences. Do view the stats at www.ucas.com
- **HEPI:** The Higher Education Policy Institute published its response to the HE Green Paper in the form of a collection essays by leading experts. In many cases it highlights lessons to be learnt from past reforms. Take a closer look at the experts' opinion at www.hepi.ac.uk
- **More HEPI:** The latest Occasional Paper called for a greater focus on employability rather than employment and proposed a metric of skills that could be used as a TEF measure. Find out more at www.hepi.ac.uk
- **Skills Funding Agency:** A call to employers! The SFA published information about when the National Apprenticeships Service will help promote employers' apprenticeships and traineeship vacancies. Find out more at www.gov.uk
- **UUK:** In December it published a Paper on 'Supply and Demand for Higher Level Skills' arguing that the demand for graduates with higher-level skills will remain high for the foreseeable future with some of this caused by a mismatch in job and skill expectations. Go to www.universitiesuk.ac.uk
- **More UUK:** Latest annual report Patterns and Trends in UK Higher Education 2015 published by Universities UK. The report presents a range of data on the changing size and shape of UK higher education. Find out more at www.universitiesuk.ac.uk
- **BIS:** A new report, Further education: impact of skills and training on the unemployed has just been published. The report found that further education can make a substantial impact on the chances of unemployed people finding work. Find out more at www.gov.uk
- **Universities are in 'a bun fight' over schools that offer rich pickings in outreach.** Social mobility in remote areas is at risks and pupils are missing out as the era of Aimhigher fades, a new study conducted by researchers at the University of West England finds. Access the report at www.uwe.ac.uk

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NUS: STUDENTS NOT MARKETISATION AT THE HEART OF HE POLICY

SORANA VIERU



With the publication of Green Paper for Higher Education and the announcement of the Autumn Spending Review, the timing of this interview with NUS Vice President (HE) Sorana Vieru in November 2015 was propitious. Sorana talks about the consequences of latest HE policy from a students' perspective and sets out the current NUS line with passion and foresight.

It is a pleasure to meet you Sorana. Tell us about your journey. How did you end up as Vice President (HE) of the NUS?

I have always been a very political person. I was brought up to think of myself as a citizen and that you have to take your political role in society seriously. I was seven years into higher education having done an undergraduate degree, a taught Masters and with a PhD in progress. I have always been involved in student politics from the feminist society to the LGBT society and also the Labour Club. The flexible pattern of my Philosophy studies allowed me to spend a lot of time campaigning and also to put my PhD on hold. I decided to suspend my studies and to run as a Sabbatical officer before running as NUS Vice President. Having experience of many levels of higher education helps me understand many of the issues of the different student experiences.

What should be the right balance between vocational and academic learning? I'm particularly thinking about the shift in emphasis from HE to FE.

Although my remit only covers HE, I definitely share the view of NUS' vice president for further education. We think that the only way to address funding is to come up with a realistic, holistic and sustainable model for funding all kinds of education. Historically, the government has focused on HE in a way that saw it as the only gateway to social mobility, ignoring FE and apprenticeships and any kind of vocational training beyond Level 3 that isn't in higher education. Actually, HE is not the best choice for everyone. It is elitist to uphold the narrative that you need a HE degree in order to succeed. For a lot of people FE or an apprenticeship will be the best choice that they can make in their career and in their life and they should have a wide range of choices. But I don't think the solution is to take money out of HE for this and burden students with further debt in order to readdress the balance.

What are your views on the Green Paper?

It's a mixed bag. You would have seen that the NHS bursaries have been cut. This is a move we are fighting against as it is unfair and negatively affects access into NHS professions and the student nurses. It is a direct consequence of this government's attitude to the NHS. In the same way higher education is not viewed as a public good, so the NHS is not viewed as a public service. The turning of the maintenance grants into loans has also been confirmed and this is something we have been campaigning against since the summer budget announcement, so we are obviously disappointed.

How will the Teaching Excellence Framework change the landscape?

Greatly. We talk of the Green Paper as the biggest change to HE since 1992. It is another roll of the dice in marketing HE and fulfilling something that the tripling of the tuition fees and raising the cap to £9,000 three years ago hasn't fulfilled, which is to create a functioning undergraduate tuition market. The next stage is the introduction of the TEF. The

aim of it is to raise tuition fees further and to get tuition fee differentiation between institutions, allowing private providers to enter the system. It is a move towards marketisation and we absolutely don't believe that marketisation and competition are the way to drive teaching quality. The TEF talks about teaching quality but not in the way that we talk about it which is as students and staff working together to create the academic communities that they want – to improve learning environments and teaching, as opposed to pitting institutions against each other. It is survival of the fittest and students will bear the brunt. We believe all students are entitled to excellent teaching regardless of where they study.

Your thoughts on the proposed Office for Students?

I call it OFSET – Office for Students, Employers and the Taxpayer. We have done a word count on the Green Paper: there are thirty-three mentions of what employers want and only sixteen mentions of what students want. Even then it is in relation to taxpayers and employers. So no, it is not in the interests of students. The Green Paper sees universities as churning out students fit for employment afterwards rather than seeing education as a public good.

There will be £120million worth of teaching grant cuts by 2020. The Student Opportunity Fund for the poorest and disabled within the teaching grant will be cut. Considering that the Spending Review will be setting the funding structure until at least 2020, what are your views on how widening participation will move forward in universities? What is NUS's stand?

We were against the cuts two years ago and we are against them now. I find that the Government's rhetoric around social mobility and investing in widening participation at odds with what it actually does. For politicians, it is a ticking-the-box exercise. It means getting underprivileged students and black and minority ethnic students into places like Oxbridge, it

means uncapping students numbers and allowing more students in. Instead of setting targets they should be listening to what students are saying and supporting them to succeed, and this also means financial support. Saddling the poorest students with unprecedented levels of debt and penalising them is unfair and it is not what widening participation is about. People are put off by debt and there are cultural differences in attitudes towards debt. We have done research on the first cohort of £9k fee-paying graduates that graduated this summer and we found out that 33% of BME respondents to our survey view student debt on par with commercial debt. The political mantra disregards that. It is driven by an ideological agenda. There is also a line about how student debt isn't really a problem because 'you won't have to pay it back', which is basically like saying, 'don't worry, you'll still be poor, so you won't have to pay it back'. How is that inspirational for someone from a family with no experience of going to university?

What can we do in society and in the sector to support widening participation?

We need to talk about access beyond getting students through the door. We must look at access across the board and at success of retention because students from widening participation backgrounds are far more likely to drop out and also are subject to attainment gaps. BME students are less likely to achieve 2:1s and Firsts. The data is skewed depending on subject and institution but the BME attainment gap is 16% across the sector and from all subjects. We must restrict talking about access in terms of entering HE as it does not mean that the barriers have been removed – it is the education system itself that is inaccessible!

There are pedagogical remedies that can be applied and a lot of student unions and the NUS are campaigning to liberate the curriculum. You might have heard of the term. It means making the curriculum

more representative of the experiences of women, black, LGBT and disabled students' lives; about changing assessment methods so they work for different kinds of students. It is about creating curricula that match student needs better, not about making students fit into the mould of what succeeding at university means. Because that mould and the notion of what academic success is has been created by the ones who are privileged by the system already. Students and staff must work together to make the curriculum more representative, to make changes on assessment methods, to look at how inclusive learning spaces are (for example how inclusive is a lab to women and how does that manifest itself in the under representation of women in STEM subjects and their careers afterwards?) and to change some of the practices in seminars so that they are more inclusive.

Do you think the new proposed deal on maintenance grants for part-time study will improve the current situation of declining participation?

We have welcomed the introduction of loans to part-time study and to making that available. If you are going to have a scheme, as broken and as unsustainable as that is, at least it should be open to everyone. At least this would recognise that part-time study is the best choice and solution some students. We still, however, think that there is not enough talk about solutions to part-time education and to the decline in the number of mature students going into university. Whenever politicians talk about access and widening participation it is always about full-time undergraduate study by 18-year olds. They should realise that widening participation is about lifelong learning and mature students are way more likely to study part time than on a full-time basis.

You have had a great career journey so far. Did you visit your careers service when you were at university?

I attended two universities: Birmingham

and Bristol. They both have exceptional careers services and although I did not use the services extensively myself I think they are hugely important and that there is a bigger role for them to take on. Part of the consequences of the increased marketisation of the HE sector is universities over-focusing on employability. For many subjects this is simply not appropriate and if anything it drives consumerist behaviour from students and forgets about the development of other skills which naturally turn into transferrable skills and employability skills. I believe that employability is mainly the job of the careers service and that it should be accessible and as wide ranging as possible to all kinds of subjects and students. The NUS are supporting careers services in their very important work.

You can find more about the NUS research and policy mentioned in this article, and much more, at www.nus.org.uk

UNIVERSITY AND BUSINESS COLLABORATION AT THE HEART OF THE EMPLOYABILITY DEBATE

AARON PORTER



In a special interview feature for this issue Aphrodite Papadatou catches up with former NUS President Aaron Porter. Aaron is now an active Higher Education consultant working across a portfolio of projects. Now Director for External Affairs at the National Centre for Universities and Business (NCUB) Aaron is at the forefront of the employability agenda in the context of university-industry collaboration.

Aaron, it is great to see you still very much committed to higher education policy.

I remain very committed and passionate about higher education and employability is a particular aspect of that. Across a couple of roles I have got a real engagement with the HE policy agenda. In part with the NCUB, helping them engage with the outside world but also overseeing annual research on the student employability experience.

Looking at student employability in the context of university-business collaboration, is the role of university careers services still important?

Absolutely! Careers services play a central role in supporting employability for students through the service that students can access directly but we also know of the important role careers services play in working with academic departments to ensure the latter have the latest research or the latest innovation at their fingertips to embed it to their curriculum.

What is the importance of university-business collaboration?

NCUB has at its heart the desire to further increase the quality and quantity of university and business collaboration in the UK. And it is of critical importance – not just because students are saying that is what they want but because it is important for universities to be delivering cutting-edge research for what industry needs. It is also important to inform teaching. Universities will often say that they have two key missions: research and teaching. But the collaboration with industry is almost what makes both of those things relevant.

How is this collaboration manifesting itself?

Prominent examples would be access to work experience for students and joint research projects between research interested business and universities and things like CV clinics and guest lectures from industry, curriculum content which is informed by real case studies from business, and employer boards that help to shape the curriculum or offer some views on how it can be developed. These are all fine examples of how universities are already working with business. The key challenge for universities is spreading that good practice more widely between departments, but also to think about the diversity of employers that they are working with. There is sometimes a particular challenge for universities to work with micro and small businesses as the latter have what we refer to as a 'diminished absorptive capacity'. This means the extent to which small and micro businesses in particular are able to absorb knowledge from a university, which may be limited owing to their size and resources. But we know that SMEs in particular can benefit exponentially from university engagement. One graduate with a piece of research can transform a small business in a way in which it would have a much smaller impact in a larger business!

How will the latest developments in HE policy affect the delivery of employability in a university-industry collaboration context?

The Green Paper is an extension of government policy which has been developing for seven or eight years, it's the next step in that journey. It is notable that within the proposals the Teaching Excellence Framework to which a large proportion of the Green Paper is dedicated there are specific proposals about the extent to which there needs to be a higher education system that not only delivers for students but delivers for employers. However there are lots of practicalities which need to be properly thought through.

The business voice will have an important role in shaping the TEF and NCUB are engaging with the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills to help provide a range of business voices to inform its development. Another crucial dimension is social mobility and we know that some industries in particular are still not nearly representative enough of the university population, let alone wider society. More needs to be done by both universities and business to give young people in particular access and support so that they can succeed and thrive in a range of industries – particularly the media and law.

Where will investment come from for these activities?

Universities are already spending a lot of time and effort into improving employability. The Green Paper invited business to take a more active stake and therefore play a greater role in engaging with universities. The money comes from a portion of the tuition fee and the ongoing block grant and from streams of money that come in from employers. I expect all three streams to continue to invest in employability. What is potentially different and posed in the Green Paper is the fact that tuition fees might start to rise

further and in line with the with the TEF and I feel it is highly likely that the only way in which we be able to demonstrate excellence in teaching is by delivering successful returns on employability.

But how do we measure employability? It is not as we know something measurable only by looking at graduate destinations.

I agree. I think we need to be really thoughtful about what we use to measure employability. It would be quite restrictive if we simply used earnings data and destinations data as measures of employability. Employability in its broader sense is the ability to make contribution to society and to the world at work and that is not simply achieved by how quickly you get a job or by how much money you earn. Reflecting that in a national framework is tricky so the government has set itself an ambitious but challenging target in order to more adequately reflect high quality teaching and employability.

How is the NCUB making a difference in delivering employability now?

A real focus of our activity has been to provide work experience for students from a range of diverse backgrounds. Work experience, paid internships and placements are all very important means by whereby students get to know the world of work and moreover employers use it as a chance to learn about perspective future employees. If the individuals who are undertaking work experience are not diverse then it makes ensuring a diverse workforce difficult too. It is something that businesses are very mindful of. Many are undertaking new initiatives to target students from non-traditional backgrounds but more needs to be done. This has been a challenge for decades if not centuries and it will take time to be fixed but it will be fixed with investment in education right through the various levels, commitment from businesses to do something about it, and dynamism on the part of students who need to be motivated to pursue the opportunities.

Now for a slightly abstract question. What might the future landscape for HE and employability look like?

I would like to see every single student that goes through higher education have some access to work experience – that would be game-changing! The other area that lots of people that I know are also passionate about is the question of IAG, because it is just not good enough and it is maybe the single biggest barrier to realizing the potential of individuals. If the government are as committed as they say they are to teaching excellence and social mobility then we need to ensure that individuals have access to the right information to make choices. Technology provides a huge opportunity. For example, both Prospects and Hotcourses (who I work with) provide vehicles through which students can start making important choices about what to study or about HE-to-work transitions. But it needs to be done through a range of means – it needs to be embedded in the school system and it needs to be provided for by universities. It's not so much about the quantity of data. It is partly a question of the quality of data and more importantly a question of the advice and guidance itself. You can have really rigorous data available but if you don't know how to interpret it you are still at a disadvantage. How we allow young people in particular to understand data about their future prospects is crucial.

Many experts think it is important we approach IAG like other systems like the NHS, i.e. in terms of life-long cycles.

Indeed. I think we need to learn lessons from elsewhere. There are other industries that are using a life-cycle approach to a range of matters. As you say, they are trying to shift the NHS towards a life-cycle approach to health and social care. In the consumer world, a company like Amazon uses smart technology to understand your needs and make recommendations to you about things that are relevant to you. You would think something similar could be

used in advice and guidance where technology understands the subjects you are studying, what you are doing well in, asks you questions about what you are enjoying, examines the sorts of jobs you are looking at but also asks you about what other jobs you might be looking up, factors in the work experience that you are doing, and helps you with your career decisions in a life-cycle manner, not just when you are out of university.

Great, we all agree! Before we finish is there anything you would like to shout out about?

The one thing I would like to mention specifically is the Student Employability Index. In its second year NCUB have been working with Compass to deliver a piece of research which captures the views of 115,000 students in fifty five UK universities. We've got their views on a range of things, including their use of the career service, the extent to which they think employability is developed, their undertaking of work experience and placements. We are looking to publish this research early in 2016. Each of the universities involved will be given their own data so they can benchmark themselves against the national picture. We all think that the research as a whole provides a really informative contribution to the national discussion with regard to employability. It will certainly be useful to universities and it might be useful to government, policy makers and commentators. We are very much looking forward to engaging with careers services to help them understand what this means for them and how they can further develop the already good services they are providing.

To find out more about the Student Employability Index or any other work of the NCUB, contact Aaron on aaron.porter@ncub.co.uk or go through the NCUB website at www.ncub.co.uk

THE SHORT GOODBYE

BRIAN HIPKIN



Our regular columnist Brian Hipkin contemplates his farewell speech – farewell to Regent’s University and his last full-time post in higher education although he will continue to work in the sector as well as pursuing multiple new paths.

I have been waiting 45 years to give this speech. I will have to do justice to those years in just two minutes. My audience may not even be paying attention. I need to be true to myself, to the moment – this opportunity will never come again. I am leaving full-time work forever. I have been a student, academic and senior manager in all the mission groups, including one that no longer exists. What do I want to share? What do I need to say? What do they want to hear?

In the end it’s easy – I will go for pure emotion.

Heroes

Yes, higher education can, indeed should, bring a tear to the eye, a lump to the throat. We are after all, a people business. We enable more transformations, grant more wishes than all the fairy godmothers treading the boards of all the pantos at Christmas. I have always been struck by the unconscious trust that thousands of young people put in our ability to help shape and direct their future. Our trust in surgeons may only need to last a few hours but we are granted students’ most impressionable years. But what lessons have nearly five decades of HE taught me? That it is a journey largely determined by flashes of serendipity, illuminated by light bulb moments.

A basic failure at school, I never ‘got’ A levels and they certainly never got me. It was one afternoon at my FE College (high kudos to FE) that I ‘got’ exam technique. The tutor never knew that they had given me the key to my future – they were just doing their job.

Education can be life-long, but learning, truly understanding something, takes a nano second. One minute you don’t the next you do. A few years later as a lecturer in Sociology (it was after all the 70s) it was always my aim to flick that switch, to create the ‘now you do’ moment. I guess deep down I just wanted them to experience the changes of perception that I had. I wanted them to leave the lecture theatre with a new prescription on the lens through which they viewed and understood the world; seeing it differently from when they came in. Being sometimes a conscious and sometimes an unconscious partner in a student’s learning has been one of the great ‘warm fuzzes’ of my career.

On reflection we rarely get a chance to say thank you to those that often unwittingly change our lives with a word, an explanation or even silent permission to just try something.

I am pretty sure that for my ‘mentors’ thanks has come too late as they have all now passed away – a reflection not of their frailty, but of the length of my career in academia. My speech will name them. My audience may never have heard of them. But I was there; I know what they have done for me, what permissions they have given me to become who I am now.

It may not be cool to have academic heroes but I have one – the late Stuart Hall. He was who I wanted to be, he said the things I wished I said, came up with ideas, concepts and ways of understanding, whose coat tails I could barely catch. I was lucky enough to have met him a few times, but it is that first encounter that will be in my farewell speech.

I was presenting a paper at an undergraduate sociology conference. I don’t think it was that good, it was of its time – would-be radical, full of critique and the belief that we were the first to ever have these ideas. When I had finished he said just a few words, just a few eloquent words, encapsulating what I had rather bombastically spent an hour trying to say. In that instant he became my hero, my role model, set me on the path that has now nearly run its course. He will never know this – it never seemed right to bring the subject up the few times we met in subsequent years. But I will say it in my farewell speech.

Induction

My guaranteed teary-eyed moments book-end the student lifecycle: Induction and Graduation. A total of a year of my life must have been spent in working parties planning inductions and then reviewing them. That first week is one where every part of the university wants to get their message to the new students in the belief that everything in their world will be better if only students took on board that particular bit of information the minute they stepped across the threshold. Have they so easily forgotten their own first days at university or even their first days at school? These are memories etched by fear and uncertainty!

Research has shown that the most basic thing new students want is that simple human impulse to be liked, to make friends. I have a very simple formula for my speeches of welcome: I tell the same story. I speak of my first day at university. Not as the first step on the path to success and lifelong friendships. But of the overwhelming feeling of growing panic that I was the only one in the room who had no clue as to what was going on, why they were there and what the hell they had to do next that day. The story never fails. It has the effect of ‘normalising’ the normal. We have to stop and ask ourselves who we are speaking for during induction. Are these sessions essentially advertising breaks to tell students what

we have to offer? Students don't know what they don't know and will ignore that which they don't believe immediately relevant.

Over the years I have grown to trust that the fears and uncertainties I felt in first few days at university were 'normal', 'universal' and worth sharing, even if it made one student feel OK about what they were going through it would be worth it for me. My farewell speech needs to show me in the occasional bad light. Universities have hard water flowing through their veins.

Things can over time get clogged up with deposits of cynicism and I have not always been immune. The 4.30pm-on-a-Friday student who must see you as it is urgent and no one else can help them; the student who has a 'friend' who was allowed to do the very thing you have just said 'no' to; the student knocking on anyone's door seeking the magic words 'yes' rather than the probably correct 'no' they have been consistently receiving from everyone else.

They have all at times come near to draining my reserves of good will. But there is one student who will always be there, on my shoulder, as a caution against any assumptions I may build up about students' intentions.

They knocked on my office door at 4.30pm on a Friday (of course); suffering from temporary cynicism overload I very testily answered the door and before they could speak I directed them to my PA down the corridor. Their taken aback look told me that I had jumped to the wrong conclusion about their intention. 'Sorry,' they stammered. 'I just wanted to say thank you for all your help. Today is my last day at uni and I could not leave without saying thanks for everything, it changed my life.' They will have a place of honour in my speech. I leave my most tear-jerking and lump-in-the-throat moments, appropriately, to last.

Graduation

Over the years, increasingly by design, I have become more and more addicted to attending graduation ceremonies. I am now at well over the 100 mark. I have attended, given orations, been Master of Ceremonies and conferred degrees at ceremonies across Europe.

They have become my end of year spa, my detox from accumulated cynicism. Their infinite variety represents a sociological insight into differing ways of celebrating success.

The one thing that they all have in common is their impact on me: I cry. The hairs stand up on the back of my neck and I get choked up. Which is well and fine but not when you are the one doing most of the talking.

There is one ceremony that will make it to my farewell speech, one student who I could not applaud hard enough. He did not get a first. He took six years to get just a third. He had been in and out of prison during his time as a student. His story is worth a few paragraphs in the farewell speech.

I first met him, or rather his support worker, a few months into a new senior role. I was running induction at the time. This student had fallen foul of bad debt rules, his attendance was terrible and he had gone missing from the University for almost a year. No one would make a decision as to whether he could come back. I was called in. The support worker explained that the student had been in prison for a year; one mystery solved. The charity which employed the support worker was willing to pay his debts. They only needed someone to say 'yes', that the student could return. At that point I had been a senior manager for eleven years and with it came the often 'silent' power to untangle regulations, to sanction workarounds, to 'make things up as I went along' that others heard as clear decision making. I said 'yes'.

A year later this student was back in prison and a year after that he was back at enrolment with a new care worker. Again I was called in. Again I said 'yes'. I have never regretted this. Another year passed and he walked across the stage to receive a third class honours. What an incredible achievement! Only he and I got to know what that moment meant. He had no family and I kept my role in his achievement to myself – until now.

I would love to add into my speech that he went on to great success turning his life around.

But I have no idea what happened to him. Like the thousands of other students whose life stories have featured me in but a cameo role, I lost touch with him. I live in hope that I was able to just briefly nudge the direction of their lives, to provide a 'light bulb' moment.

Forty-five years will never fit into two minutes. Memories will fade, names and faces will slip away, including my own. It will be the opportunity to repay the gifts my heroes gave me that has made it all worthwhile. By the time you read this the speech would have been made. It may end up nothing like this. Other stories may feature – but the pure emotion will be there.

MASTERS GRADUATES AND THE UK LABOUR MARKET

CHARLIE BALL



Charlie Ball examines the outcomes for UK-domiciled Masters graduates six months after graduation using data from HESA Destination of Leavers of Higher Education (DLHE) surveys. It looks at data for graduates from the 2013/14 academic year, examines how they fared on leaving university and looks at the types of jobs they got. It then proposes a simple methodology for potentially examining whether there is a specific labour market for Masters-level qualifications and if that has changed over time. Charlie is Head of HE Intelligence at Prospects and a leading expert in the field of graduate LMI.

Outcomes

Masters graduates from 2013/14 enjoyed relatively favourable outcomes six months after graduation, with the large majority in work six months after graduation and unemployment relatively low. Figure One shows details for this cohort, broken down by mode of study.

It is necessary to separate out full-time and part-time students for this cohort in order to get a balanced picture of outcomes and the jobs market, as the two groups are rather different.

Fifty-six per cent of this cohort had studied full time, 44% part time. 77% of full-time Masters graduates were under 30, whilst 74% of part time graduates were over 30 when they completed. Part-time Masters graduates are more likely to have an existing employment history, and many return to previous employers on graduation.

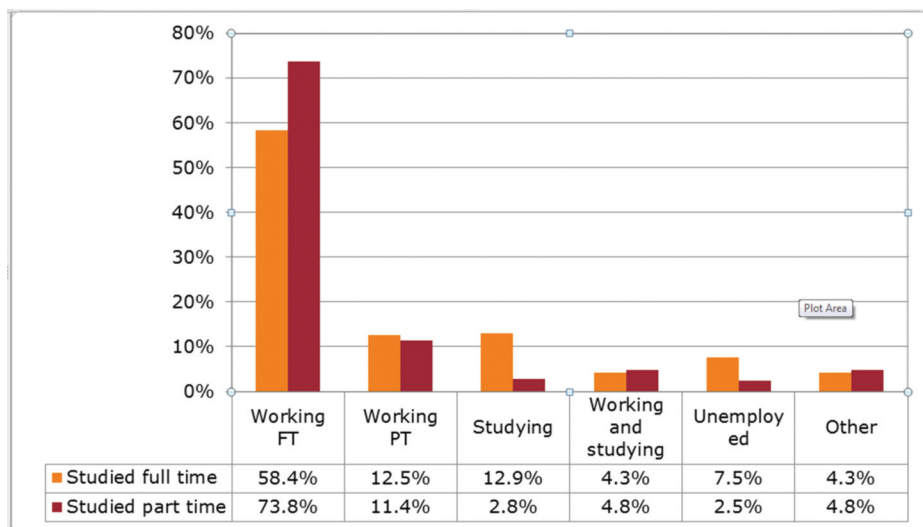


Figure One: Outcomes for UK domiciled Masters graduates from 2013/14 after six months, by mode of study

As a consequence, outcomes differ. Full-time graduates were more likely to continue on to further study, largely into doctoral programmes, but were also more likely to be out of work than their part-time counterparts – and more likely to be out of work than full-time first degree graduates. Part-time Masters graduates were much more likely to be in work.

Eighty per cent of part-time Masters graduates working part time were in professional level employment, and the majority stated that they took their role as ‘it fitted into my career plan’ or ‘it was exactly the type of work I wanted’, and so this option should not generally be seen as a negative choice.

These figures represent an improvement in outcomes for Masters graduates over the last 12 months.

Figure Two summarises data for full-time Masters graduates over the past three years (methodological changes to the Destination of Leavers of Higher Education survey prevent the comparison of data prior to 2011/12).

Outcomes for first degree graduates saw a significant improvement in 2012/13, and this improvement continued for 2013/14 graduates. For Masters graduates, we see

a later improvement, with a significant fall in the unemployment rate, taking place for 2013/14 graduates.

This suggests that the prospects for these graduates may have started to improve a little later than for first degree graduates but also offers hope that we may see a further fall in the unemployment rate over the next 12 months. Part-time graduates also saw a modest fall in the unemployment rate, but outcomes were already generally favourable and merely improved once the UK came out of recession.

The differences between the part-time and full-time Masters graduates can be seen clearly.

The Masters job

There is a lively ongoing debate about the ‘graduate job’ and the question of which jobs require degrees. There is consensus that a jobs market exists for which first degrees are the main qualification and which is not necessarily accessible for workers without this level of qualification.

It is not so clear that a similar market exists for Masters degrees outside of some very vocational niches. This section uses simple indicators from DLHE to explore the idea of a ‘Masters level’ job. We examine roles that fulfil the following

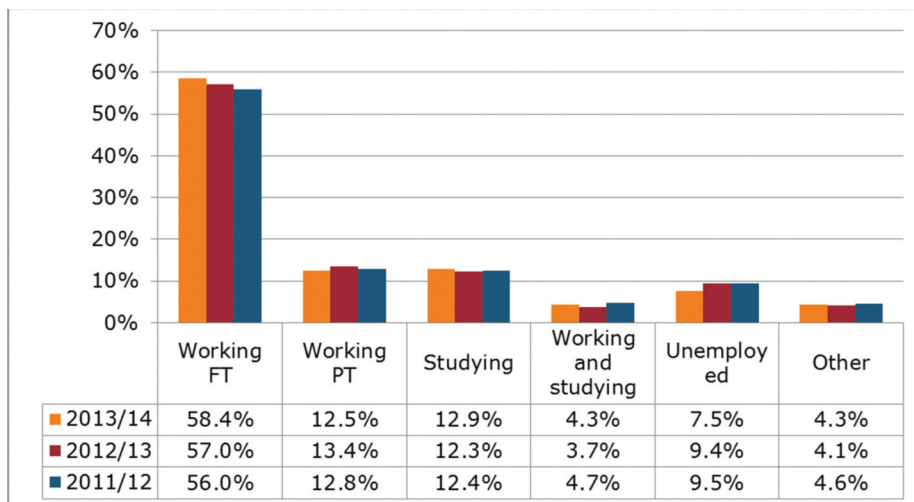


Figure Two: Outcomes for UK domiciled full time Masters graduates from the three years 2013/14, taken six months after graduation.

criteria: the majority of new entrants from 2013/14 with a Masters stated that their degree was a requirement or conferred an advantage in entering the position, and where more than a particular proportion of new entrants from all levels of HE held a Masters.

Seventy-eight per cent of new entrants to occupational psychology had a Masters, and 86% of Masters-level entrants stated that their degree was a requirement or conferred an advantage to entry.

The number of new entrants in the cohort was small – 25, from all levels of study – and so it is not clear how definitively we can suggest that this is a ‘Masters level’ role. No other role had a majority of entrants with a Masters qualification.

If we then examine roles where more than 40% of entrants had a Masters and where the role is not defined very broadly, we get the following table.

This table excludes certain professionals, most notable senior officers in the police and Armed Forces, with a high proportion of Masters-level entrants, but where the Masters was not generally a requirement for entry. This is most likely because of Masters study forming part of ongoing professional development. In chartered surveying and social work,

94% and 91% respectively of Masters level entrants stated that their Masters was at least an advantage, but Masters entry was a small proportion of total entrants.

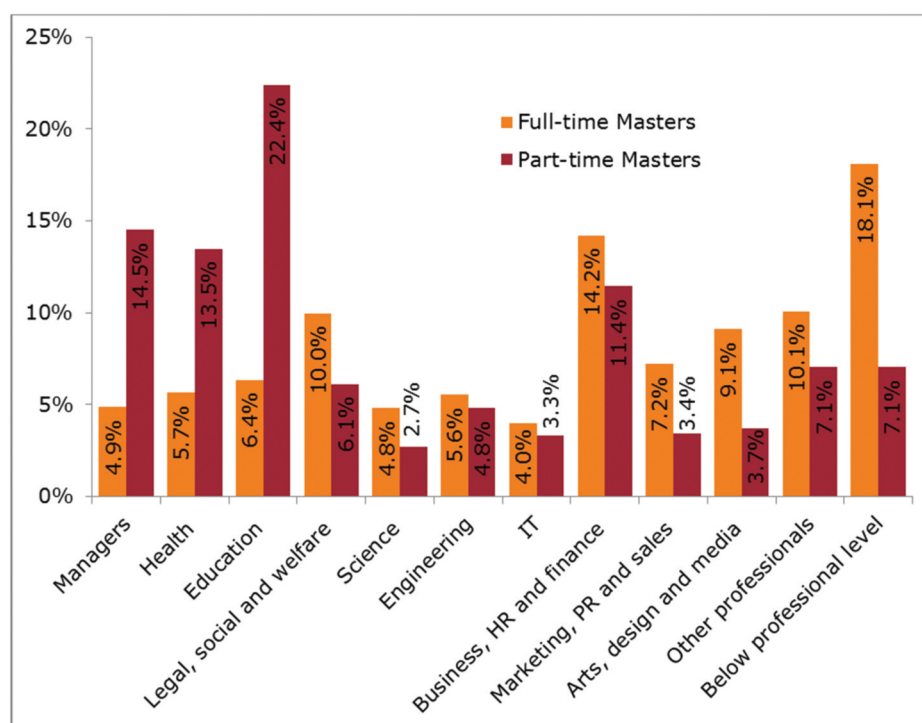
This suggests niches that are not necessarily captured by the current occupational classification system. Both professions are amongst those considered in short supply.

The other roles on the list have both a relatively high proportion of Masters level entry and a relatively high perceived requirement for those Masters degrees.

It is not certain that this data demonstrates that a widespread ‘Masters job’ market definitely exists but these roles in occupational psychology, archiving, planning, health, land and environment seem to be likely candidates.

If we examine historic data, we can see that all of the roles in Table One also fulfilled our criteria in 2008/9 – indeed several had a higher proportion of entrants from Masters, with economists, archivists and curators and geologists all seeing more than 50% entry via Masters.

The only new entrant to the list since the start of the recession is environmental health professionals. Statisticians appear in 2008/9 data but by 2013/14 undergraduate entry had become more significant to the UK labour market. If we go back further, to 2002/3 – albeit using a different occupational classification system – many of the roles would also have fit our conditions. Roles that would



have been Masters level at that time that no longer qualify include surveying positions – now dominated by undergraduate entry – and HR management, which is still predominantly postgraduate entry but with an increasing proportion of entry from specialist diplomas.

The evidence suggests that a labour market exists for postgraduate qualifications outside the doctorate, but that undergraduate entry is still possible, and there is some fluidity as qualifications change and adapt to demand.

Some niches – in the environmental and earth sciences, in occupational psychology, in planning, in economics and in archive and curation work – may appear to be ‘Masters’ level, and bear exploration to establish how qualifications interact with these labour markets.

It is not merely a case of grade inflation making previously undergraduate level roles now only accessible to postgraduate entrants.

This does not appear to be happening to a great extent. There also seems to be movement away from postgraduate entry in some professions, and the drivers of this process are not yet understood.

Role	Proportion of new entrants from 2013/14 with Masters	Proportion of Masters entrants stating Masters at least an advantage
Occupational psychologists	78%	86%
Archivists and curators	48%	75%
Economists	45%	86%
Health services and public health managers and directors	45%	64%
Psychology assistants	44%	85%
Geologists, mineralogists, etc.	43%	95%
Town planning officers	42%	86%
Environmental health professionals	41%	94%
Conservation professionals	40%	78%



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PROGRESSION OF LONDON COLLEGE LEARNERS TO HE AND THEIR VITAL ROLE IN IMPROVING SOCIAL MOBILITY

ANDREW JONES



This article introduces us to the findings of fascinating recent research into FE-to-HE progressions. The research itself, commissioned by Linking London, focuses specifically on institutions in the capital but it provides a fascinating insight into the role of colleges in progressions and, ultimately, social mobility. The message is clear: more government support is needed to assist in this vital task if we are to be seriously committed to both social mobility and economic growth. Author Andrew Jones is Deputy Director at Linking London and a prominent IAG expert.

The work of colleges is misunderstood and their impact in terms of improving social mobility and on the economy is undervalued in the corridors of government. Ongoing funding cuts and a narrow focus on meeting the target of three million apprenticeships by 2020 means that vocational courses, including those that prepare learners for employment or higher level study, face an uncertain future.

The findings of the report, *Progression of College Students in London to Higher Education 2007-2012*, (Sept 2015) commissioned by Linking London and its partners and undertaken by Sharon Smith, Hugh Joslin and Jill Jameson at the University of Greenwich, provide a clearer

understanding of the vital role colleges in London play in providing a second chance for learners and in supporting significant numbers of the most disadvantaged learners to succeed at college and progress onto HE.

This article will draw out the key findings and also look at some of the issues that need to be addressed to help ensure that not only do college learners continue to progress on to higher education in a wide range of HE institutions, but that they also thrive and succeed once there.

The data

The report (the second commissioned by Linking London) examines the progression of level 3 learners (Access, BTEC, GCE A2 IB, NVQ, & other vocational) from London further education (FE) and sixth form colleges onto full-time undergraduate HE between 2007-08 and 2012-13. Nearly a quarter of a million London college students were tracked between 2007 and 2011.

The report is based on data derived from a national study funded by the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills into the progression to HE of students from all FE and sixth form colleges in England and undertaken by matching individualised learner record datasets with HESA datasets.¹

The research explores progression longitudinally, examining both immediate and long term progression, enabling exploration of patterns of progression over time as well as HE achievement rates. The matched records contain demographic information about the learners such as gender, age, ethnicity and domicile, prior attainment at key stage 4 (KS4), where they progressed from and where they progressed to.

The context

The London educational context is increasingly complex, with a wide variation in the 879 secondary schools, including comprehensives, academies, faith schools, studio schools, free schools, university technology colleges and private schools. There are just under 50 FE and sixth form colleges, although this figure is likely to reduce with FE college mergers that are likely to take place after the area based reviews. In 2012, 50% of post-16 students in London were in the FE and sixth form college sector (40% v 10%).² In terms of HE institutions, there over 40 universities based in London, as well as an increasing number of alternative providers. Most FE colleges also provide a range of part and full time HE provision.

Key findings

In terms of the characteristics of London college learners, the population of Level 3 learners aged 17-19 grew considerably, increasing by 33%, while the population of Level 3 learners aged 25+ fell by 20%. By 2011-12, 62% of the tracked cohort were between 17-19 years old. Between the first cohort in 2007-08 and the last cohort in 2011-12, there was a 10% growth in the overall number of level 3 learners.

In terms of the type of level 3 qualification studied, Access to HE Diploma numbers were up 24% and BTEC numbers nearly doubled. Meanwhile the numbers of A Level/IB learners in the tracked cohorts fell by 11%. In the latest cohort year 2011-12, BTEC learners made up a third of the total tracked cohort and there were double the number of BTEC learners than A Level learners.

London FE and sixth form colleges are seen to cater for an increasingly deprived cohort. The findings show that 77% come from deprived neighbourhoods and 61% are from BME groups. Nearly half of all

¹ Smith, Joslin & Jameson, 2015, *Progression of College Students in England to Higher Education*. BIS

² Hodgson, & Spours, 2014, *What is Happening with 17+ Participation, Attainment and Progression in London?* Paper 3: Colleges. London Councils Young People's Education and Skills

college level 3 learners in the cohort tracked had not achieved 5 GCSEs A*- C including English and Maths in secondary school.

When exploring higher education progression trends, the findings in this report show that FE and sixth form colleges in London provide an important route into higher education. Progression rates vary by Level 3 qualification type. A Level and Access to HE Diploma learners have the highest rates of progression to HE, while BTEC learners, whose numbers nearly doubled across the tracked cohort, saw a significant decrease in progression rates across the cohort years (58% v 37%).

When broken down by ethnicity the progression rates of White British learners are lower than learners from BME groups. Asian learners generally have the highest progression rates. By HE qualification, the findings show that the majority of young London learners progress onto a first degree whereas older learners aged 25+ years are more likely to study a range of programmes including other undergraduate qualifications (e.g. foundation degrees, HNCs/HNDs).

In terms of delivery, whilst the majority of college learners progress onto university study, by 2012-13 the numbers studying HE in a college doubled to 14% of those progressing. When progression is broken down by mission group, 9% of college A Level learners go on to study at a Russell Group university, compared with 4% of Access learners and 1% of BTEC learners.

In terms of HE success, 66% of London college learners tracked were found to have achieved their first degree. A further 11% achieved a lower degree, e.g. a foundation degree or HND/HNC (having initially started their first degree). This is lower than the overall England achievement rate of 77% (and 3% lower award). The achievement rate varies by

entry qualification, with A Level learners from London colleges seeing significantly higher achievement rates than their peers who progressed from Access to HE Diplomas and BTEC. Attainment of a good degree (defined in the report as a 1st or 2:1) is also lower for non-A Level learners who complete their first degree and lower than for Access and BTEC learners in the rest of England overall.

HE progression rates for the cohort who did not achieve 5 GCSEs A*- Cs were significantly lower than their higher attaining peers who did achieve at this level (71% v 52%).

Conclusions

The findings of the report show that prior attainment of KS4 at school has a significant impact on HE progression. While London schools have the best GCSE results in England, learners in London sixth form and FE colleges have lower GCSE attainment.

However, colleges in London play a key role in helping students with lower prior attainment at school to continue their studies to achieve at Level 3 and then for a proportion of these learners, FE study enables them to further progress on to HE study. At least one in two learners who achieved their Level 3 qualification in college, and who had left school with low attainment at KS4 went onto HE study. This reveals a significant role the sector has in the capital as a mechanism for social mobility.

Dealing with issues and the future of London FE

In terms of immediate progression there has been a significant decline in the number of BTEC college learners (58% v 37%) progressing on to HE during the period the research covers. Further analysis of more recent cohorts needs to be undertaken and a more detailed breakdown, by entry qualification, needs to be conducted longitudinally, to provide a clearer picture of what is happening in

terms of BTEC progression, especially given the fact that the majority are low KS4 achievers at school.

Compared with A Level learners, only a minority of Access and BTEC learners progressed on to Russell Group institutions. Further research should be conducted to identify the reasons for this and what could be done to help address this where relevant.

There are issues to address in terms of HE retention and success for non A Level learners. London college learners on BTEC and Access courses are less likely to successfully complete their degree and are less likely to achieve a good degree classification than the average for England. This raises questions about the preparedness of these learners, the suitability of the HE curriculum and the type of support provided whilst studying in HE.

It is worth noting that when comparing the London college cohort with the whole of England cohort, they differ in composition in terms of BME, disadvantage and age profile. Moreover, only a third of learners in the London tracking study were studying A Levels before HE entry whereas the majority of entrants to HE in England do so. It is also important to highlight that White British learners are least likely to progress on to HE. This needs to be reflected more in terms of government policy and HE widening participation priorities.

There are lessons to be learnt for future planning: a focus on success, achievement and in some areas retention are areas that need to be addressed, including how progression into the most appropriate higher level learning for the individual college learner might be improved. This resonates with Linking London's and our partners' desire to work collaboratively on a higher-level skills policy for London.

ENGAGING EMPLOYERS TO SECURE THE FUTURE OF STEM IN HIGHER EDUCATION

MATT ROBINSON AND JACQUELINE GRAY



As part of the University of Lincoln's recent HEFCE Catalyst-funded project to develop two new schools in mathematics and chemistry in conjunction with employers, University Alliance were commissioned to produce research looking at how universities across the UK engage with employers in STEM provision. This article presents the findings in two parts: first, Matt Robinson, Data Analyst at University Alliance, presents the findings of the research; second, Jacqueline Gray, Industrial Liaison Officer at the University of Lincoln, presents an inspiring case study of her institution.

Part 1: The research

Since the 1997 Dearing Review successive governments have called for greater collaboration between the university sector and the world of business to boost economic growth, improve productivity and encourage regional development. Collaborations in research and innovation are fairly well developed, with a large number of reviews, reports and dedicated funding streams around applied research and knowledge transfer. What is less well developed is our understanding of employer engagement in course provision, construction and delivery.

To better understand who in the sector is getting involved with in this type of employer engagement we surveyed 61 universities from across the UK to find out how, where and why they are engaging as well as finding out what barriers to

collaboration exist, and what support is available. We also conducted five in-depth case studies, exploring the motivations and benefits of different methods of employer engagement to gather first-hand knowledge and examples of how these relationships develop, and exploring some of the pitfalls to avoid when creating strong and meaningful partnerships.

Types of engagement

As with most forms of partnership, employer engagement can be split into light touch and the deeper, more joined-up strategic commitment. Examples of lighter touch engagements usually involve limited commitment on both sides and relate to short term projects such as providing information, advice and guidance through guest lecturers or presentations; work placements or internships; or limited input into course modules.

The stronger, more strategic forms of engagement involve a much greater level of commitment and resources from both sides, often financial but sometimes through donation of time and energy. Examples include curriculum design, delivery of programmes and projects, bursaries and financial support for students, and financial investment in educational infrastructure.

Employers and subject mix

Of the 61 universities that responded to our survey, 50 indicated that they were involved with strategic employer engagement. We found that this was across a range of employers, from the largest international companies all the way to the local SMEs and even examples with public and third sector employers. The subject areas for engagement also covered the breadth of STEM but there was a particular focus on computing, biological sciences and engineering. These subject areas correspond to industries with reported skills shortages and also reflect areas where there has recently been strong economic growth.

Motivations and rationale

In our survey we asked universities about the rationale and purpose underpinning their decision to actively engage employers. The responses were widespread, reflecting the range of perceived benefits from engagement with industry, but the most common answers were student focused, around improving employability outcomes and the overall student experience.

Many institutions also highlighted the internal challenges to creating deep employer engagement: the difficulty in managing and balancing the resources required for successful outcomes to engagement with the day-to-day requirements of running university provision.

Barriers and enablers

Two of the main issues we identified on why universities don't engage in more strategic forms of collaboration are how projects are funded, and their sustainability. Partnerships are often built on individual relationships between members of industry and the university and as such can be at risk if and when these members of staff move onto other projects or to different employment. Having strong structures in place through institutional policy and strategy, an organisational culture that values these relationships and high levels of academic staff engagement can act as catalysts for sustaining and developing these collaborative projects.

The most significant barrier we identified was the availability of funding. Exploring this further, we discovered that fewer than half of respondents reported receiving financial investment from employers while 80% had put forward their own university's funds for these activities. Twenty-six per cent had received HEFCE Catalyst Funds to support and develop this activity, something which should be noted when considering the future of this funding stream.



Conclusions

Our case studies and the survey responses described above support research by Bolden and Petrov (Richard Bolden and Gergy Petrov (2014), Hybrid Configurations of Leadership in Higher Education Employer Engagement, Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management, 36(1)) which suggests that the key success factors for long lasting strategic employer engagement include strong institutional champions within each organisation; a culture of rewarding and supporting this behaviour and the ability to institutionalise any individual partnerships to help ensure continuity as people leave and change roles.

Part 2: An Institution's Perspective

University of Lincoln School of Chemistry: A new vision

When we established the University of Lincoln's new School of Chemistry in 2014 our founding Head of School, Professor Ian Scowen, laid out the department's vision for a 'new chemistry' based on pursuing science relevant to the needs of industry, producing research-active and commercially-aware graduates, and formalising the concept of 'professional practice' in Chemistry.

Working with local and national industry partners means that we can provide practical, up-to-date experience for our students, as well as an industry-informed curriculum and valuable work placements,

while working to benefit businesses by reducing the 'gap' between student and employee.

Industry engagement has moved beyond the employment agenda, particularly with Chemistry graduates following such diverse career paths. We take an innovative five-starred approach to working with businesses, incorporating student and graduate placements and mentoring; employer involvement in the development and delivery of our programmes; collaborative research and development; facilities access and training support; and student sponsorship opportunities.

Curriculum design

For our Chemistry and Forensic Chemistry students, Professional Practice begins as soon as they join the University and continues throughout the student programme. For example, our first-year undergraduates were recently set an industry challenge by RB, one of the world's leading consumer goods companies and producers of many cleaning, consumer healthcare and personal care products.

Working in teams, our students were tasked with de-formulating a medicinal product using analytical techniques. Their project proposals were reviewed for suitability by an expert industry panel before university and industry colleagues collaboratively supervised and assessed their resulting laboratory work.

Work placements

Alongside industry contribution to curriculum design and development, work placements are invaluable for our students. By stepping out of the classroom, students become immersed in the working environment and surrounded by the industry practices and decisions that could form an important part of their future careers. The MChem programme offers an innovative 'end-on' placement in the fourth year of study to support the

employability of our students, and the School is also proactive in sourcing intern opportunities for those in their early years.

R&D

Our new Joseph Banks Laboratories form the centrepiece of the Lincoln Science and Innovation Park, a visionary partnership between the University of Lincoln and Lincolnshire Co-op. The building features cutting-edge research facilities and excellent teaching resources, including specialist laboratories for work in chemistry, pharmaceutical sciences and biology.

This state-of-the-art facility provides an effective environment to develop mutually beneficial collaborations with industry partners and to train our students on industry-standard equipment. This investment also supports our engagement with schools as well as a growing scientific community within the region.

This area of study provides students with an overview of the application of chemistry in commercial and industrial contexts and develops fundamental skills in mathematics, IT and health and safety, which underpin their course and, in turn, careers.

Deeper engagement

We regularly work with industry partners to host events specific to their line of work, such as a two-day 'national user group' meeting with Bruker UK (providers of our major instruments used in structural science). We also hold training events with iFormulate through a partnership which includes collaborative research projects and significant contributions to our specialist Professional Practice modules. Opportunities such as these expand our students' experiences and provide yet another opportunity for businesses to contribute to the quality and sustainability of the skills pipeline in the subject areas that are most relevant to their needs.

STUDENT SERVICES AND TEACHING EXCELLENCE: WHO'S MEASURING WHAT?

BEN LEWIS



Ben Lewis examines the implications of the Teaching Excellence Framework for Student Services for universities and discusses the increasing importance of these guardians of the student experience in qualifying teaching excellence in the context of the new HE landscape. Ben Lewis is Chair of AMOSSHE, The Student Services Organisation.

'Excellence' in the student experience

What does the UK government's proposed Teaching Excellence Framework mean for Student Services at English universities? On the face of it, not very much – academic staff are responsible for teaching and learning, whereas Student Services professionals enable a successful student experience, and focus on levelling any barriers to success so that students can make the most of their learning.

Many of us would interpret our roles as increasingly co-curricular: supporting and enabling higher learning and successful outcomes for the student. That may be through skills development opportunities, crisis resolution or enabling access for disabled people.

However, the UK government's recent Green Paper on Higher Education proposes a broad definition of teaching excellence that reaches beyond teaching quality to include the student experience in general terms. The paper says that higher education teaching excellence in England should encompass the whole

learning environment ('ensuring the student develops the ability to study and research independently') and student outcomes ('students' knowledge, skills and career readiness are enhanced by their education').

There is a direct reference to student support, which could mean more than academic mentoring: 'all students [should] receive effective support in order to achieve their educational and professional goals and potential'. It is clear that if the concept of teaching 'excellence' is extended to include an excellent learning experience, then the positive impact of Student Services on students' readiness and focus on learning is there for all to see.

Furthermore, it is the wider student experience that the government intends to measure first of all, in order to determine teaching excellence. Three of the key Teaching Excellence Framework metrics proposed in the Green Paper, which may ultimately be used to compare higher education providers, are student retention/continuation, graduate employment destinations and student satisfaction. All these areas are directly impacted by Student Services provision, and indeed how well institutions resource their Student Services.

Measuring 'Excellence'

Whether these are meaningful measures of teaching excellence is clearly a matter of debate. Taking graduate employment outcomes as an example, Professor Simon Gaskell, chair of the Universities UK quality assessment task group, gave a good illustration at a recent select committee discussion about assessing quality in higher education.

He pointed out that the majority of students at Queen Mary University of London are from ethnic minorities, and state school educated. Queen Mary's law graduates are less likely to enter top city law firms than their Oxbridge peers but his

evidence indicated that this has more to do with a deficit in social capital rather than a direct result of their academic attainment, or indeed teaching quality. Academics are right to query what these metrics would measure, but Student Services might reasonably ask: who will do the measurement?

What our data shows

Data from AMOSSHE, the professional association for Student Services leaders, shows that in 2015 careers services were part of the Student Services remit at 58% of UK higher education providers. Also, a focus on employability (including placement opportunities, job shops and integrating careers services into Student Services) was one of the top areas of Student Services work in 2014/15 or planned for 2015/16.

If graduate employment is going to be a measure of teaching excellence, Student Services at about half of English universities are going to be involved in either the collection of data about graduate outcomes or the drive to improve those outcomes through initiatives designed to increase students' employability.

In addition, AMOSSHE's data shows that student engagement and retention were among the most likely areas to have come into the Student Services remit in the 2014/15 academic year – another of the major initial Teaching Excellence Framework metrics.

So if Student Services increasingly have responsibility for careers, engagement and retention, it seems likely that they would be responsible for, or deeply involved in, the measurement of an institution's teaching quality.

A holistic approach to 'Excellence'

The fact that these areas are moving under the umbrella of Student Services may reflect institutional focus on developing a holistic, end-to-end student

experience. The government's Green Paper rightly looks at the student experience overall as an integrated part of academic teaching and learning, but down on the ground in many universities there is still a strict divide between academics on the one hand and Student Services on the other.

The work of Student Services to support and enable student success is not always dovetailed with how personal tutors (for example) go about the same thing.

Considering this divide, will some universities shy away from scaring the academic horses by putting the responsibility for high Teaching Excellence Framework scores onto the shoulders of Student Services? If so, with the institution's reputation for teaching excellence riding on Student Services' retention and graduate employment initiatives, rather than academic teaching standards, Student Services can expect a lot of extra pressure to produce the most desirable retention and careers statistics.

This may lead to good things – increased budgets for Student Services, perhaps – or changes: some higher education providers might move careers and employability out of Student Services' scope, reversing the general trend of the last five years, in order to develop this area independently.

In either case, questions will need to be answered: will institutional focus move away from the quality of the student experience itself? Will the value of the holistic student life decline, in favour of measurable, monetised outcomes?

Student services at the heart of the new economy

The government's desire to create a higher education marketplace implies a purpose for higher learning that is founded on economics: students from all backgrounds (well, home students anyway) should do well at university in

order to get high paying jobs and contribute to the economy.

But there are other benefits for students to gain from higher education: personal fulfilment and development, new ways of thinking, friendships and networks, life experience. These are some of the benefits that Student Services aim to enhance through the creation of student experience opportunities.

However, a great university experience for the student, leading to personal fulfilment and development, may not translate into the outcomes that the government wants to rank. So those aspects of higher education that are harder to measure, and that Student Services work hard to enhance, might become less important.

The Teaching Excellence Framework aims to rank higher education providers according to common, standard measures: a 'level playing field'. But should all higher education providers be looking to provide the same things, the same economic outcomes? The role and purpose of Student Services will be key to how each institution answers this question: how will the student experience be valued, rather than just measured?

This article raises more questions than it can answer, and that is partly because, as it stands, the Teaching Excellence Framework and its metrics are still nebulous. Everything needs to be hammered out in the forthcoming consultation. So far, the implications for Student Services have gained little attention but AMOSSHE will make sure it becomes a key part of the ongoing conversation, because the value of the student experience is itself so important.

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We are often asked about the i. Since most other things with an i in their name (ipod, iphone...) were the brainchild of Steve Jobs we should explain that the i in iCeGS stands for international and we are not another kind of Apple product.

Here are a few examples of how this works in practice.

People

iCeGS comprises eight staff but also has a large network of over 40 research associates and visiting professors and fellows, some of whom live and work overseas. Notable examples include Professor Jim Sampson (Florida State University), Professor Jim Bright (Australian Catholic University in Sidney) and Dr Lyn Barham (based in Padua in Italy).

Conferences

We are often invited to speak at conferences and undertake research or training overseas. In the last 12 months one or more of us has worked in Australia, Kosovo, Czech Republic, Japan³, Norway and Saudi Arabia.

Visitors to the University of Derby

Sometimes visitors from other countries come to Derby to find out more about the career information and guidance system in the UK or to undertake their own research.

Even as I write this, we are hosting a party of ten educationalists from Hong Kong who are in the UK for a week and experiencing a packed development programme organised by iCeGS in which they will hear about: the work of the Career Development Institute, and the University of Warwick's courses for careers practitioners, CASCAID, icould, careers development of employed people - from our visiting Professor Wendy Hirsh. They will visit a college, a school, and the National Careers Service, as well as have presentations from experts on quality standards in careers work, preparing young people to become 'career ready' and the work of the National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling.

iCeGS also hosts visiting scholars and for three months in 2015 we gave a desk and academic support to Randi Boelskift Stovhus from Via University College in Denmark as part of her doctoral study.

Research

The Centre's main purpose is research and we take every opportunity to find out about, contribute to and write about careers work in other countries. As any other research team in a UK university, our publications are our life blood.

Here is a selection of the ones with international themes, with live links to access/download the articles.

Neary, S., Thambar, N. and Bell, S. (2014). The global graduate: developing the global careers service. *Journal of the National Institute for Career Education and Counselling*, 32: 57-63.

Moore, N., Zecirevic, M. and Peters, S. (2014). Establishing Croatia's lifelong career guidance service. *Journal of the National Institute for Career Education and Counselling*, 32: 19-26.

Borbély-Pecze, T.B. and Hutchinson, J. (2014). ELGPN Concept Note No. 5: Work-based Learning and Lifelong Guidance Policies. *Jyväskylä: The European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN)*.

Hooley, T. (2013). *Career Development in Canada*. Derby: International Centre for Guidance Studies, University of Derby.

Hooley, T., Watts, A. G., Sultana, R. G. and Neary, S. (2013). The 'blueprint' framework for career management skills: a critical exploration. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 41(2): 117-131.

Finally,

....so you see we are not another apple, not a Granny Smith or a Cox Pippin... we are researching career development both in the UK and overseas from a tower block in Derby. Get in touch if you would like to know more or work with us.

Tel: 01332 591267.

**Jane Artess,
Principal Research Fellow, iCeGS**

<http://www.derby.ac.uk/research/icegs/>