

# **The Future of Higher Education Teaching and the Student Experience**

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## **Summary**

The aim of this contribution is to provide a reference point for policy decisions about teaching and the student experience over the next 10-15 year period<sup>1</sup>.

I show that we provide outstanding teaching and that the quality of our students' experiences is among the best in the world. The outcomes for our economy and our society, as well as for graduates themselves, are excellent. Academics and higher education institutions have worked energetically to address the needs of a student body that is larger and more diverse than ever before.

However, our country will need different kinds of student experiences to enable its graduates to contribute to the world of the future. We must extend our students, whether they study in traditional or less traditional ways, enabling them to find resources of courage, resilience and empathy that traverse national boundaries.

To do this will require a clearer sense of relative responsibilities. We will not be able to take the student experience forward unless we see it as a joint venture between students and those who provide higher education. Universities and colleges should be prepared to contemplate remodelling their curricula, perhaps radically, and building a more flexible workforce. Government and agencies should be ready to introduce funding models and quality systems that will realise a vision of higher education as an engaged partnership between students and providers.

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<sup>1</sup> The contribution considers the United Kingdom as a whole, while recognising that distinctive approaches in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales each play a role in the development of UK higher education.

## Part 1: Responding to evolving student expectations

*A perspective on how higher education institutions and academics, in the UK and internationally, are currently responding to students' evolving expectations of their educational experience*

- 1.1 Over the past twenty years our student population has become large and diverse. The idea of a single experience or set of expectations has no meaning. Higher education in this country is no longer dominated by 18 to 21 year olds living on campus, studying full time, attending classes, enjoying a social life dominated by their colleagues, and being taught by a privileged academic elite. Large numbers of students work long hours in paid jobs, study off-campus or in the workplace, learn in flexible ways that involve networked technologies as well as face to face teaching, live at home, and commute to university. Most belong to social networks that reach far beyond higher education. Their experiences extend from the collegiate environments of Oxbridge to studying with local entrepreneurs. Their expectations are as varied as their experiences.
- 1.2 What has not changed is the value of a degree and the reputation of UK higher education. We remain admired across the world for producing well-trained graduates who are highly employable. They are valued for their independence, openness of mind, creativity and problem solving skills. They gain knowledge that is rigorous and professionally relevant; they derive great personal benefit and enjoy life-changing experiences through their relationship with higher education.
- 1.3 The quality of teaching in UK higher education, and in particular its focus on personal attention to students and on the achievement of high level learning outcomes, has been sustained in the face of sizeable pressure on resources. Completion rates continue to be high<sup>2</sup>; surveys of students and graduates indicate that the quality of teaching and the relevance of the curriculum are regarded as exceptional. Typically, over eight out of ten undergraduate and postgraduate students are satisfied overall or describe their experience as having met or exceeded their expectations<sup>3</sup>. Persistent strong demand from overseas students to study in the UK, in spite of the advent of many competitors, indicates that our reputation for an outstanding experience remains high internationally<sup>4</sup>.
- 1.4 This superior performance<sup>5</sup> is probably related to some traditional characteristics of the academic role in UK higher education, together with more recent developments in professionalism. There is a keenness to innovate in all aspects of the student experience among many UK academics, and there is an inquisitiveness about better teaching that is most likely related to the long-established idea that university teaching should be associated with research in the disciplines. Acceptance of the 2006 UK Professional Standards Framework<sup>6</sup> for teaching in higher education would seem to confirm the view that teaching is held in high regard across the sector's academic staff and by universities and colleges.

### Changing expectations

- 1.5 Most students have a limited view of what higher education is like before they begin it. Students often anticipate an environment substantially different from the one they actually experience. Students may be unaware of the demands of a university education in terms of workload, independent learning and access to resources<sup>7</sup>. The responses of student forum members confirm

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix 1.

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix 2.

<sup>4</sup> See Appendix 3.

<sup>5</sup> See Appendix 4.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/policy/framework>. By September 2008, 99 HEIs across the UK had aligned their provision of accredited courses with the Professional Standards Framework.

<sup>7</sup> Lowe and Cook (2003). Also evidenced by Academy surveys of academic and support staff and students undertaken for the purposes of this inquiry.

this lack of awareness from personal experience<sup>8</sup>. Naive student expectations are not a new phenomenon; but as we shall see, higher education needs to do more to deal with them.

- 1.6 A greater variety of types of students has inevitably increased the *range* of expectations – students with caring responsibilities, students who are less well prepared academically, less able, or less independent as learners, students living at home, students working significant hours off-campus in paying jobs, students with a disability, students learning in the workplace, international students whose first language is not English, and so on. These unavoidably pose additional challenges for universities and their staff.

## **Are students more ‘instrumental and demanding’?**

- 1.7 The findings from the student juries<sup>9</sup> do not suggest major changes in ‘average’ expectations over the last ten years. There is some evidence that students are more insistent on high quality support services, easily available technology and better infrastructure<sup>10</sup>. New styles of communication outside higher education have led to expectations of 24 hour, seven day a week availability of support. There is very limited evidence to support the view that students now regard higher education purely as a means to an end or are more insistent on high quality teaching. There is a risk of creating a self-fulfilling prophecy that today’s students are ‘more demanding consumers’ in relation to the quality of teaching.
- 1.8 Nevertheless, a characterisation of today’s students as ‘breezily self-confident’<sup>11</sup> rings true. They are more liable than earlier generations to evaluate the experience of higher education as part of the broader context of their social and business networks. They are more likely to complain if the support services they encounter are inadequate or do not compare to their equivalents outside higher education<sup>12</sup>.
- 1.9 Will these expectations be appropriate for a student experience that will enable graduates to contribute to the world as it will be in 10 to 20 years? It is important to understand that universities and colleges do not simply react to student expectations. They shape them as well. Higher education institutions have substantial influence over the discovery and development of their students’ expectations. The extent to which students expect greater staff availability, better support services and facilities, and assessments to be fully explained and justified depends on the context in which they find themselves – including the other students they encounter.

## **Academic and institutional responses to evolving expectations**

### ***Reaffirming the importance of teaching and student learning***

- 1.10 It is impossible to disentangle changes that are solely responses to different student expectations from responses that have occurred for other reasons. The outcomes, however, are the same. The past ten years have shown a general tendency for higher education in the UK and internationally to pay more attention to the student experience and the quality of teaching.
- 1.11 This is true across the whole UK sector, including its large research-intensive universities. It has

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<sup>8</sup> [http://www.dius.gov.uk/policy/he\\_slp.html](http://www.dius.gov.uk/policy/he_slp.html)

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> JISC (2007). Also evidenced by Academy surveys of academic and support staff and students undertaken for the purposes of this inquiry.

<sup>11</sup> Barnett (submitted 2008).

<sup>12</sup> Academy survey of academic and support staff undertaken for the purposes of this inquiry.

been driven partly by initiatives from funding bodies and their agencies and partly by institutional aspirations to retain and grow market share for students in a global environment where research performance tends to dominate reputational ratings. A very similar response has occurred in Australia and some other countries.

- 1.12 Examples range from contractual statements about staff availability and hours of teaching<sup>i</sup> to new policies and procedures associated with the recognition and reward of teaching in promotions decisions. We have also seen commitments to swifter turnaround times for assessed work and greater emphasis on the formative aspects of assessment<sup>ii</sup>. Higher education institutions have made an increasing number of appointments of senior executive staff whose responsibilities embrace the student experience<sup>iii</sup>.
- 1.13 Systems for recognising distinction in the provision of higher education and collecting and responding to student feedback have been put in place internationally, such as the recently-established awards for excellence in the Swedish system<sup>13</sup> and the Course Experience Questionnaire in Australia. Increasing interest has been shown in the results of such national initiatives by academics and higher education institutions both here and abroad, suggesting that there has been a cultural change towards revitalising the importance of teaching and the student experience.
- 1.14 Recent well-publicised examples of a reaffirmed commitment to the student experience include the University of Manchester and the London School of Economics and Political Science. At Manchester, attention has been given specifically to raising the status of undergraduate teaching, to curriculum reform, and to creating more personalised learning environments<sup>14</sup>.

#### ***Better use of ICT and improved student support services and facilities***

- 1.15 There is now much more effective use in higher education of ICT to enhance and support learning. Students see ICT as a means to improve learning through better access to resources and information, and as a complement to face-to-face interaction with academics, rather than as a substitute for good teaching and personal contact<sup>15</sup>. Higher education institutions have gradually aligned their use of technology to these expectations and integrated new learning technologies into their teaching and learning strategies.
- 1.16 They have also paid more attention to student support services (careers, international centres, study centres, etc) and to the quality of service provision (including more rapid responses to queries and problems as they arise)<sup>iv</sup>. There are more support staff available to students and support facilities are generally available for longer hours.

#### ***Investment in infrastructure***

- 1.17 Higher education institutions have invested considerable sums in providing enhanced learning spaces and upgraded infrastructure for students. Libraries are being improved and are opening for longer periods. New university buildings and halls of residence are being built and older ones improved to incorporate better facilities for students<sup>v</sup>. Nevertheless, there remains a huge backlog in this area and not all institutions can find the resources to invest.

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<sup>13</sup> See Appendix 5.

<sup>14</sup> See Appendix 6.

<sup>15</sup> Joint Information Systems Committee (2007).

### ***Student engagement: communicating and responding to students***

- 1.18 Universities and colleges have introduced a range of improved mechanisms for communicating with students about their experiences and better procedures for responding to student feedback, including internal surveys and the National Student Survey (NSS). In some cases, they have initiated major change in response to survey feedback. The Higher Education Academy has compiled detailed case studies of changes that universities and colleges have made in response to the NSS<sup>16</sup>.
- 1.19 More broadly, there is growing recognition that students have a major role to play in the enhancement of teaching and assessment. Universities and colleges are increasingly positioning students as engaged collaborators rather than inferior partners in assessment, teaching, course planning and the improvement of quality, and are using student representatives as central contributors to the business of enhancing the student experience<sup>vi</sup>.
- 1.20 In a recent study, nearly three quarters of English higher education institutions indicated that they had recently introduced or would soon introduce new mechanisms for student engagement. Eighty-four per cent of them said that they wanted engagement processes to become more effective<sup>17</sup>.

### ***Professionalism in teaching***

- 1.21 Academics, universities and colleges have developed a culture of professionalism associated with the teaching role in higher education. This has led to improvement in the threshold standard of teaching (and supervision of postgraduates) and acceptance by the sector of the UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching in higher education. This framework is unique in the world, and its importance is increasingly recognised internationally<sup>vii</sup>.
- 1.22 Poor assessment practices and inadequate teaching techniques are no longer easily tolerated in any higher education institution. Basic training in teaching skills has become the norm rather than the exception. There are currently 20,000 fellows of the Higher Education Academy and there are almost 300 accredited programmes in teaching for academics<sup>18</sup>. Several higher education institutions have introduced specific tracks for promotion to senior posts associated with teaching excellence<sup>viii</sup>.

### ***Innovative and flexible curricula***

- 1.23 Now that part-time students form a large proportion of the student body<sup>ix</sup>, universities and colleges are providing progressively more courses and curricula that meet the needs of non-traditional students – part-time, foundation degrees, work-based learning, and flexible routes. Once again, similar responses have occurred overseas.
- 1.24 Some universities here and internationally are showing interest in curriculum-led branding (for example University of Manchester, King's College London, University of Aberdeen, and University of Melbourne<sup>x</sup>) as a marketing strategy in response to student expectations. Information and communications technology has become an important component of some types of flexible provision, enabling students to enter higher education who might otherwise not have been able to.

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<sup>16</sup> [http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/ourwork/research/NSS\\_institutional\\_case\\_studies](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/ourwork/research/NSS_institutional_case_studies)

<sup>17</sup> Scesa and Little (in press).

<sup>18</sup> As of September 2008.

## Part 2: Challenges for the future

### *The main challenges for the future in maintaining and improving the quality of the student experience*

- 2.1 Employer, government and student expectations of higher education have increased noticeably over the last twenty years. Despite the outstanding performance and adaptability of the system, there is no room for complacency about the outlook. Government and the sector confront a series of challenges in maintaining and improving the quality of teaching and the student experience in the period to 2020. Underlying these issues is the question of what kinds of student experiences will be needed to ensure that graduates are equipped to contribute to the world as it is developing.

### **Resources and infrastructure**

- 2.2 We need to sustain investment in learning spaces and accommodation in a more complex and expensive operational context for higher education institutions. Today's students have higher expectations of the quality of learning infrastructure and many are disappointed by what they find, despite the improvements that have been made over the past few years. Although international students' satisfaction with their experience is similar for UK and overseas institutions, the latter are perceived by international students to have much better library facilities and somewhat better learning spaces and technology<sup>19</sup>. There is also a question about how to provide well designed learning spaces in workplaces where higher education is delivered.
- 2.3 A related issue is the quality of teaching and professional support staff. At present, students generally consider teaching and services to be of high quality<sup>20</sup>. However, there is a finite boundary to the extent to which the requirements of an increasingly diverse population of students can be met within current personnel resources. We also do not know the degree to which larger student contributions to the cost of higher education in England may influence expectations of teaching quality in the future.
- 2.4 Meeting these demands will require increased levels of funding and a related challenge for the future is to identify where these resources will come from. Higher education institutions face increasing market risk; the costs of teaching are increasing faster than the Retail Prices Index or the probable future rate of increase in public funding<sup>21</sup>. There will probably need to be a more diverse combination of funding sources.

### **Flexibility of offer**

- 2.5 We face a challenge in accelerating progress towards funding and support models that are less complex and recognise more flexible patterns of study at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. Current systems of student support encourage full-time provision and promote a sharp boundary between part-time and full-time study. Over four out of ten students study part-time, but they cannot gain access to income-contingent fee loans. Students who move from full-time to part-time face very different systems; this may contribute to non-completion<sup>22</sup>.
- 2.6 We also need to review the extent to which current academic timetables and academic calendars, which were constructed to meet the needs of a smaller and less varied student population, are fit for purpose in a near-universal system.
- 2.7 The effective use of technology is a necessary component of flexibility of offer. The most important issue in this area is to embed a culture among academics and higher education

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<sup>19</sup> Bush et al (2007).

<sup>20</sup> See Appendix 2.

<sup>21</sup> Port (in press).

<sup>22</sup> London Economics (2007), House of Commons Education and Skills Committee (2007).

institutions that is consistent with students' views of ICT as a complement to rather than a replacement for face to face attention<sup>23</sup>.

- 2.8 A specific challenge related to the curriculum is to maintain flexibility and a range of options while at the same time ensuring that the student experience is not fragmented. How can universities and colleges ensure that students continue to feel part of a community of learners when they are part of a larger and more varied student body? How can they align the pressure for more flexible forms of delivery for all students (including work-based learning and teaching at weekends and in the evenings) with an emphasis on lifelong learning, depth of academic experience, and co-curricular activities? How can they balance engagement with academic work with a focus on graduate employability? And more broadly, what kind of curriculum will prepare graduates for an uncertain global future – a future in which their capacity for commitment, agility and boldness will be tested to its limits?

## **International issues**

- 2.9 Competition between UK and overseas universities to attract international students is likely to intensify, particularly as more countries offer programmes taught in English and provide education at standards which are 'good' rather than exceptional, but at much lower cost to the student<sup>24</sup>. The importance of maintaining and improving our reputation for high quality teaching and learning outcomes cannot be overestimated. Yet this must take place in an environment that is more expensive and risky for universities and colleges.
- 2.10 The international experience of UK students remains a concern if we wish to ensure that our graduates acquire the characteristics of global citizens. Higher education institutions may need to review the opportunities they provide for local students to work with overseas ones, while the low outward mobility of UK students compared to their counterparts internationally<sup>xi</sup> may have a negative impact on the quality of our students' learning experiences and employability.

## **Maintaining and enhancing student engagement**

- 2.11 A special quality of the English higher education system compared with the systems of continental Europe is the 'intimacy of the pedagogical relationship'<sup>25</sup>: care of the student is considered to be important. But feedback on learning and the personal component of teaching may be among the first to be challenged in a lower-resource environment, posing a potential threat to the UK brand. The fact that students now come from a much broader range of abilities and backgrounds intensifies the challenge.
- 2.12 Retaining and building on the special qualities of teaching and the student experience in UK higher education – proximity of staff and students, partnership in learning, and personal attention – for a larger and more varied group of students is an especially exacting challenge for higher education institutions and government. It cannot be avoided, since these qualities are intimately associated with our reputation and the standard of the learning outcomes that students achieve. There will continue to be pressures to believe in the rhetoric of consumerism and instrumentalism. Government and higher education will need to counter the view that students should be treated as customers who have a sense of entitlement, rather than as partners who have an opportunity to learn.
- 2.13 We will also need to confront the dangers inherent in simple arguments that students deserve better 'value for money' through larger numbers of contact hours and to address difficult issues

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<sup>23</sup> Joint Information Systems Committee (2007).

<sup>24</sup> Vickers and Bekhradnia (2007).

<sup>25</sup> Scott (1993).

about how to involve students more effectively in shaping provision and in quality enhancement and assurance. Greater involvement may be compromised by more flexible arrangements for student learning, with more students studying part-time, working in paid jobs off-campus and living at home.

## **Postgraduate issues**

- 2.14 Growth in postgraduate study and numbers of students<sup>26</sup> has not been met in recent years by developments in quality enhancement and a strong focus on the quality of provision at this level, particularly regarding taught programmes. A challenge we confront is to provide better information to prospective postgraduate students about quality (there is no equivalent of the NSS for postgraduates, for example). There are also issues related to the concentration and physical spread of provision and the nature of the skills postgraduates should acquire. These concerns need to be considered in the light of the appropriateness of the undergraduate curriculum to the needs of our future economy and society.

## **Student preparation**

- 2.15 We have seen how students' expectations of higher education are often inchoate. Many are poorly prepared. Many of them have little knowledge of what practically happens in higher education before they enter it. The understanding they acquire about what to expect often comes from out-of-date sources. This gives rise to the difficulty of managing and influencing expectations in a way consistent with a model of higher education as an engaged partnership and shared responsibility between academics and students, rather than a simple service model.
- 2.16 Higher education faces a challenge in providing better mechanisms for helping students to adapt to higher education and more accurate information prior to entry. The responsibility for understanding what students can expect is shared with schools and others, and requires better communication between sectors. We also need to ensure that prospective students are well advised about options other than higher education such as apprenticeships. For universities and colleges, the need to provide support throughout the first year of study for students of varying ability and background is particularly taxing.
- 2.17 A related issue is the problem of how to provide better support at the closing stages of a student's experience of higher education. Students are sometimes unclear about resources available to them and often the experience of career services in their institution is unsatisfactory<sup>27</sup>. Careers advice was highlighted as a priority area by all the student juries.

## **Assessment**

- 2.18 The undergraduate honours degree is a robust and highly-valued qualification. However, higher education as a whole faces a need to reform the current system of honours classification in order to describe achievement more completely and above all to provide information that is more useful to students. The present system of classification was designed for a smaller higher education world. It does not describe the range of knowledge, skills, experience and attributes of a graduate in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is inconsistent with the idea of lifelong learning. It reduces the complexity of a graduate's performance to a single category. And it is not reliable across different subject areas<sup>28</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup> See Appendix 7.

<sup>27</sup> Bush et al (2007); UNITE (2006).

<sup>28</sup> Yorke et al (2002).

- 2.19 Specifically, higher education faces the challenge of developing consistent reports on student achievement that describe the full range of accomplishment and can live alongside simpler summative judgments such as classifications or grade point averages<sup>29</sup>.

## **Issues concerning the higher education workforce**

- 2.20 Training of staff in fundamental teaching skills and the development of a more professional workforce have made good progress. The challenge is to consolidate this successful beginning. Higher education institutions vary in the extent to which they insist on continuing professional development in teaching, in the degree to which they equip staff with the capacity to manage a diverse student body, and in how much support they provide to vital aspects of teaching development such as scholarship in the disciplines. The latter is central to maintaining the nexus between research and teaching which is such a valued part of the student experience in this country.
- 2.21 Related human resource challenges include increasingly blurred boundaries between academic and professional staff<sup>30</sup>; international academics whose first language is not English; professional teaching standards when higher education is delivered by employers or private providers; attracting high quality teaching staff given the long term decline in the relative remuneration of academics, coupled with higher demands on them from institutions, students, employers and government<sup>31</sup>; ways of supporting more fluid interchange between the sector and other parts of the economy, both public and private; and the recognition and reward of teaching.
- 2.22 The last mentioned issue is a thought-provoking problem. Despite progress in institutional policies for promotion and the development of career paths based on teaching, a recent survey of over 2,500 staff shows that academics continue to believe that teaching is under-rewarded and unrecognised by universities and colleges in comparison with research<sup>32</sup>. There is a real sense among many academics that formal recognition is given to teaching in name only and that promotion can be obtained on research achievement alone<sup>xii</sup>. It is hard to see how further progress in enhancing the student experience can occur if attention is not given to amending the factors underlying these perceptions.

## **Quality, standards and diversity**

- 2.23 Lastly, and crucially, there is the issue of how to ensure confidence in the quality of the system and the graduates it produces.
- 2.24 The most important challenge, perhaps, is to shift the emphasis away from a narrow, procedural approach to one that is driven by innovation and enhancement. It will need to be integral with academic culture, not part of a 'quality industry'. But it must extend beyond the more traditional manifestations of academic tradition, combining the conventions of peer review with student involvement and with greater openness to public scrutiny. More transparent public information on quality may be needed to meet student, parent and employer demands. At the same time, the quality process will need to steer clear of invasive regulation, recognising that lucid information united with a commitment to the autonomy of higher education institutions and collective responsibility for the UK brand is the best guarantee of standards and quality.

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<sup>29</sup> Universities UK (2007) *Beyond the Honours Degree Classification: The Burgess Group Final Report*.

<sup>30</sup> Evidence from submissions made in response to the Academy for the purposes of this inquiry.

<sup>31</sup> Evidence from surveys of academic and support staff and institutional leaders undertaken for the purposes of this inquiry.

<sup>32</sup> Higher Education Academy survey on reward and recognition of teaching in higher education, to be published.

- 2.25 Associated challenges will be to develop better measures of institutional commitment to enhancing the student experience; and to put a check on the excessive use of multiple student feedback instruments and their associated survey fatigue. The existing Quality Assurance Framework will need to meet higher expectations. It is possible that public perceptions of quality may be compromised by greater emphasis on a more flexible ‘offer’ and the employer engagement/work-based learning agenda. Perceptions of deteriorating quality may arise if universities and colleges are seen to be recruiting international students of poor ability or inadequate command of English for purely financial reasons.
- 2.26 Perhaps the greatest challenge in quality will be to move beyond the conventional idea that there is a single metric against which all institutions of higher education may be judged — to embrace the idea that quality takes on many different forms and that diversity enriches rather than threatens standards. Excellence in a universal system of higher education entails achieving alignment between the differing needs of students and the experiences which they have the opportunity to benefit from. There remain questions about whether current funding systems contain the right flexibilities and incentives to encourage this vision of quality.

### **Part 3: Meeting the challenges**

*How the challenges for the future in teaching and the student experience might be met*

- 3.1 The narrative of this contribution has concentrated on the challenge of how to maintain and improve our performance in global terms. To secure world class status by 2020, we will need to sustain the UK’s pre-eminent position as a provider of high quality teaching and student experiences against a background of a larger and more diverse student population and increasing international competition.
- 3.2 This implies attention to overlapping and sometimes conflicting goals:
- Strengthening the distinctive character of teaching and the student experience in UK higher education
  - Accepting that complacency about the current strengths of the UK system is a potential barrier to preparation for the future
  - Developing an understanding of the recent and impending strategies of leading competitors
  - Recognising that incremental change, based on expansion of existing good practice, and strengthened by encouragement to respond to market needs, is desirable
  - Identifying a small number of issues in which more fundamental intervention by government can bring benefits.
- 3.3 To address these goals, and to enable our graduates to contribute effectively to an uncertain future that will require resources of courage, resilience and empathy, I propose a three-point plan to provide and support a different kind of student experience:
- Reforming curriculum and assessment
  - Developing a more flexible workforce
  - Rethinking quality and engaging students in a responsible partnership.

#### **Reforming curriculum and assessment**

- 3.4 We need to encourage universities and colleges to explore new models of curriculum. Government and funding bodies should incentivise and support the radical realignment of undergraduate curricula: we require curricula that are transdisciplinary, that extend students to their limits, that develop skills of inquiry and research, and that are imbued with international perspectives.

- 3.5 Only these qualities will ensure graduates who are educated to the standard which the future economy and well-being of our nation demands. That standard must enable them to embrace complexity, climate change, different forms of citizenship, and different ways of understanding individuality and cooperation. A student experience that is fit for the future will develop their qualities of flexibility and confidence and their sense of obligation to the wider community.
- 3.6 There are several models that we might explore. They should all:
- Encourage interdisciplinary study
  - Develop stronger learning communities to counter the potential fragmentation effects of increased modular and part-time study
  - Provide flexible transfer between part-time and full-time modes of study
  - Develop global perspectives
  - Incorporate research-based study for undergraduates (to cultivate awareness of research careers, to train students in research skills for employment, and to sustain the advantages of a research-teaching connection in a mass or universal system)
  - Enable closer connections between undergraduate and postgraduate study
- 3.7 The necessary flexibility between part-time and full-time modes of study would be encouraged by incentives to higher education institutions to encourage transfer of students and incentives to part-time students to enrol in higher education. Student fee contributions might be linked to modules or units of study rather than to programmes; and the connection between retention/completion of programmes and funding could be removed.
- 3.8 One curriculum example that deserves close attention is the transdisciplinary and generalist undergraduate honours degree. This incorporates research skills training, courses in globalisation and diversity, and engagement in voluntary work. Undergraduate programmes are complemented by postgraduate taught programmes which provide more specialist, vocational and applied learning opportunities. The models implemented or proposed at the University of Aberdeen, King's College London, Harvard University, the National University of Singapore, and the Universities of Melbourne and Western Australia<sup>xiii</sup>, provide examples of what can be done. The research-based approaches realised at the Warwick-Oxford Brookes Reinvention CETL, Imperial College and the National Science Foundation in the USA<sup>xiv</sup> also merit consideration. A serious conversation on future curriculum models should be sponsored by government and the funding bodies.

### *Embracing an international perspective as part of curriculum change*

- 3.9 The challenge of maintaining the UK's place in the market for international students may partly be met by policy and financial incentives to higher education institutions (see Drummond Bone's contribution). Increased investment in infrastructure and learning spaces will be particularly important in preserving market share. More generally, maintaining UK higher education's reputation for high quality student experiences and high standards of learning outcomes will depend on how effectively we address issues of quality and standards for all students, irrespective of origin.
- 3.10 Science, and more generally research, is by its nature free from national boundaries and takes international standards as its reference point. It is desirable to embed in the daily work of universities an equally strong international perspective on the student experience: in their curricula and their student support systems, in the encouragement they offer for their local students to study overseas, and in the opportunities they afford for their domestic and overseas students to learn from each other.

- 3.11 Sensitivity to the expectations and needs of international students involves issues of language and pedagogy. There is evidence that the language used in learning and assessment contains complications and subtleties that elude many students whose mother tongue is not English, despite their apparent competence in English as measured through conventional tests.
- 3.12 Universities should systematically review the language used in face to face teaching, learning materials and assessment. They should also ensure that staff better understand the varied expectations of international students. Support materials of the type provided by the Higher Education Academy (most notably its Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies<sup>33</sup>) should be more generally used and their use monitored as part of normal Quality Assurance practice.
- 3.13 The challenge of preparing home students for a global world is one of the lesser understood aspects of internationalisation. The need to help UK students embrace a world in which neither their language nor their culture is a measure of superiority can be addressed in several ways.
- 3.14 Although curriculum change is a necessary rather than a sufficient condition for competence across cultures, 'intercultural fluency' should be a central goal of every higher education curriculum. Since such fluency is inflected through the disciplines, the Higher Education Academy's subject centres are strongly placed to offer useful advice. Going beyond the curriculum, there are good case studies of how colleges and universities have encouraged productive cultural interchange and learning between their domestic and overseas students; these might be more generally disseminated<sup>xv</sup>.

### ***Preparing students better***

- 3.15 The higher education sector has not kept pace with a student population that is larger and more diverse in background and achievement. To benefit from curriculum reform, students will need better support.
- 3.16 'Value' to a student may be measured as the excess of experience over expectation; but students are often poorly informed about what they can expect. Many have only the haziest notions of what the experience will be like and how it will differ from other types of education they have encountered. Prospective students require more clarity about what higher education can and cannot provide for them and more guidance in working out what their choices could be. This implies closer liaison with schools and further education colleges to provide prospective students with a better understanding of what they may and may not look forward to.
- 3.17 We should also provide better mechanisms for helping students to adapt to higher education: more attention is needed to academic, attitudinal and social preparation for new students, throughout the first year of study. In this context, induction should be seen as a lengthy process rather than an event; it should promote interaction between students, and between them and staff, as well as academic preparation. Academic and support services should focus especially on the first few weeks of a student's career in an institution. There is a rich evidence base and there are outstanding examples of good practice in these areas<sup>xvi</sup>.
- 3.18 I recommend specific attention to preparation through a programme of support for universities and colleges to enhance their understanding of their prospective students' expectations, including liaison with schools and further education colleges, and a national dissemination strategy for effective practice in student support in the early part of a student's experience of higher education.

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<sup>33</sup> <http://www.llas.ac.uk/>

## *Rethinking assessment*

- 3.19 Curriculum reform should be complemented by a fresh look at assessment. The quality of the assessment process in United Kingdom higher education is generally sound. There are areas for improvement in ensuring common standards, in monitoring practices related to international students, and in more imaginative approaches to feedback.
- 3.20 These new approaches would involve considering evidence about staff and students' expectations and the importance of feedback as part of learning. This reveals that students are often unaware of what feedback consists of and how it relates to teaching and learning; their expectations are frequently not aligned with those of academics. It also shows that student generation of feedback, student involvement in understanding assessment criteria, and the development of focused, systematic reflection can serve as means to accelerate learning in higher education<sup>34</sup>. Student engagement, in short, is the key to improving this aspect of assessment.
- 3.21 As I noted in section 2, there is one feature of assessment that requires urgent reform. This is the current system for classifying honours degrees. It is a system that was fit for purpose when only a small proportion of the population enjoyed the experience of higher education. It has outlived its usefulness to the community.
- 3.22 The way forward is to augment the current system with better descriptions of what students have achieved. The Burgess Group recommended a new vehicle for measuring and recording student achievement – the Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) – and this should be taken forward without delay. The most challenging aspect of this work will not be the technical development of the HEAR itself, but the building of consensus and understanding across the sector to enable the phased adoption of a new system. Achieving this will require not only excellent practical solutions for the HEAR and any associated summative judgement, but persuasion and advocacy at all levels. It is important that the sector is engaged as widely as possible in every aspect of the work. It is vital to distinguish new ways of reporting achievement from the notion that the quality of the assessment process is unsatisfactory.

## **Developing a more flexible workforce**

- 3.23 Meeting the challenges will entail developing flexible approaches to academic contracts and greater equality of esteem between the different aspects of academic work.

## *More adaptable careers*

- 3.24 There is still no career structure in most higher education institutions for staff who wish to specialise in teaching and its contribution to the student experience. There are disincentives to academics who might wish to work across higher education and other employment sectors. Universities and colleges, supported by national professional associations for academics, should develop more flexible employment contracts that recognise different patterns of work. We should recognise that the academic workforce is part of wider workforce; increased fluidity and transferability between sectors is desirable, not only for research purposes but also to ensure high quality teaching and a common understanding of the connections between higher education and employment skills.
- 3.25 An assumption that academic work will always be in the same proportions of teaching, research and knowledge exchange is also limiting to quality – there is no logical reason why a staff member should not be involved 100 per cent in teaching during one year and 100 per cent in research the next.

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<sup>34</sup> Hounsell (2003).

### ***Re-establishing scholarship***

- 3.26 To maintain the advantages to the student experience of teaching that is linked to research, innovation and inquiry, incentives to higher education institutions to encourage academic scholarship are desirable. Scholarship is an essential practical bond between teaching and research, especially in science and technology, involving the reinterpretation of knowledge and the identification of superordinate themes. It is probably best exemplified in the single-author textbook. Project fellowships and study leave to produce scholarship related to teaching will help to sustain a spirit of innovation in teaching and a high quality student experience. They will also help to redress the perceived imbalance between rewards for teaching and for research.

### ***Recognising and rewarding teaching***

- 3.27 To sustain quality and ensure an effective student experience in the future, we must find better ways to recognise and reward university teaching. National initiatives in England are well developed compared with other countries, but institutional processes are still seen by many academics to be inadequate, despite progress in policies related to promotion and the gradual ‘professionalisation’ of academics in their role as teachers. Academics in pre-1992 universities are the most likely to think that teaching is not properly recognised and rewarded by their institution in comparison with research<sup>35</sup>.
- 3.28 I recommend an allocation of funding to higher education institutions to develop more robust criteria for appointments and promotions related to teaching and to introduce training processes for staff involved in making promotions decisions. The QAA should systematically review progress and monitor staff perceptions of the effects of these changes. The Leadership Foundation for Higher Education should address the perception among many academic staff that the leadership of some deans and heads is frequently inimical to good teaching<sup>36</sup>.

### ***Reforms to professional training***

- 3.29 New models of curriculum, reforms to assessment and stronger student engagement in quality will place additional demands on academic and professional staff. Progress towards an academic workforce embodying professional teaching skills should be consolidated, with a review of the relevance of the current national professional standards framework to future needs, more support for continuing professional development after initial training, and a stronger connection between the complementary skills of academic and other professional staff.

### **Rethinking quality and engaging students**

- 3.30 The challenge of enhancing teaching quality and developing a new kind of student experience cannot be effectively addressed without attention to existing models of funding and quality assurance. We need increased resource to maintain existing levels of provision in the future; we should consider simplifying the complexities of the current student contributions scheme in England, and I have previously noted, bringing within its scope students who study part-time; we need to provide incentives to increase investment in infrastructure and learning spaces; we should consider the advantages of merit-based scholarships for the best-qualified school leavers, to be offered optionally by all universities and colleges; and we need to consolidate quality arrangements so that the robust systems in place are further refined without introducing greater regulation.

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<sup>35</sup> Higher Education Academy survey on reward and recognition of teaching in higher education, to be published.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

- 3.31 It will be important to avoid ‘initiative fatigue’ in future funding methods for higher education institutions. Their stable long-term financial planning to meet the needs of tomorrow’s students would be assisted by more predictable funding arrangements and fewer contestable funds for teaching initiatives.

### *Consolidating quality arrangements*

- 3.32 Current arrangements strike a skilful balance between strong processes and minimal intervention; they are robust and locate the responsibility for quality as close as possible to the action of teaching and learning; they encourage both autonomy and accountability; they sanction rather than stifle diversity; they have consolidated a culture of fairness in admissions, assessment, teaching and the treatment of students from different backgrounds.
- 3.33 There is every reason to argue that most changes should be incremental, not revolutionary. They might include:
- Accelerating the current movement towards enhancement-led quality assurance
  - Strengthening ‘causes for complaint’ procedures and being more vigorous in following through the consequences of any breaches of quality or standards in an institution
  - Reviewing quality assurance arrangements for postgraduate taught programmes, including information for prospective students about quality which parallels that provided for undergraduates and monitoring of international students’ experiences (including data from a new NSS for postgraduate taught programmes)
  - Ensuring that public perceptions of quality are not compromised by greater emphasis on an employer engagement/work-based learning agenda
  - Developing published measures of institutional commitment to teaching and the student experience. It has been suggested that one of these might consist of the proportion of academic staff who hold Fellowships of the Higher Education Academy
  - Reviewing institutional policies and procedures for the recruitment and assessment of international students
  - Ensuring that learning hours and contact hours are decided upon as part of a rational system linked to an explicit evidence base. However, there should also be a clear national statement to the effect that there is no evidence to support a causal relationship between the number of class contact hours and student learning outcomes
  - Proactive emphasis on diversity as a contributing factor to excellence and more vigorous critique of one-dimensional models of quality (as evidenced in most league tables)
  - A systematic review of institutional systems for collecting and using student feedback and peer observation of teaching
- 3.34 We should consider also the need for new systems to ensure comparability of standards, not only within subjects but also across them. I suggest that DIUS should coordinate a systematic debate about what constitutes excellence in student performance *across* the disciplines. Secondly, the external examiner system, despite its successes, requires review and development to produce a truly national system which, while retaining the benefits of peer review by academics, can guarantee comparability of standards of achievement in the future. Practical measures would include:
- The development of ‘colleges of peers’ in different subject areas, possibly coordinated through the subject centres, which involve regular meetings among academics to read assessment outputs and arrive at a common understanding of standards at various levels
  - Making the training of external examiners (by experts in the discipline) a condition of their appointment; and developing a national register of examiners to provide a guarantee that minimum standards are reached in different subjects and higher education institutions

## *Engaging students*

- 3.35 But the impact of these changes will be partial unless we develop a clearer sense of joint responsibilities of those who provide higher education and those who experience it.
- 3.36 We have seen that higher education is taking the views of students more seriously. Universities and colleges are deploying mechanisms for responding to student feedback and involving students in quality enhancement.
- 3.37 We must go further. It is now time to move beyond simply collecting and responding to students' views. We should embed the student perspective in all aspects of teaching, quality enhancement and quality assurance.
- 3.38 Remodelled curricula, better prepared students and a more professional and adaptable workforce require a fundamental shift in our attitude to student engagement. A partnership between students and higher education institutions will realise the ambition of a student experience which produces graduates who can meet the challenges of the future.
- 3.39 There is abundant evidence that the most effective higher education environments are ones in which students are diligently involved as part of a community of learners. As part of this engagement, they work together with academics to enhance teaching, assure quality and maintain standards. In these contexts, they understand themselves as active partners with academic staff in a process of continual improvement of the learning experience<sup>37</sup>.
- 3.40 To sustain a high quality student experience, we must not fall into the trap of accepting as accurate a reading of students principally as consumers, demanding value for money, expecting 'satisfaction', passively receiving skills and knowledge, grumpily complaining about service standards, and favouring above all else the easy acquisition of qualifications.
- 3.41 Hard evidence that students in higher education are more passive and consumer-minded than they used to be is slim; but this dystopian picture of today's students and the likely students of tomorrow has the incipient signs of a self-fulfilling prophecy. It presents a threat to our reputation for quality. We must articulate a different view to meet the challenge that this distorted image presents.
- 3.42 The vision of learner as passive consumer is inimical to a view of students as partners with their teachers in a search for understanding – one of the defining features of higher education from both academic and student perspectives<sup>xvii</sup>, and powerfully embodied in academic culture since at least the time of Humboldt<sup>xviii</sup>. There is no reason to impose a false divide between higher education as a road to a better, more highly-paid career and a vision of it as a life-changing personal experience.
- 3.43 Student involvement in quality processes should start from the idea of building learning communities. Practically speaking, this involves shaping student expectations of their role as responsible partners who are able to take ownership of quality enhancement with staff and engage with them in dialogue about improving assessment, curriculum and teaching. Development of students' own 'pedagogic literacy' and their understanding of curriculum and assessment is a necessary condition. The responsibilities on students in this partnership will be great, but the prize is worth striving for.
- 3.44 The SPARQS (Student Participation in Quality Scotland) initiative presents one valuable model of how to do this at institution and sector level, and there are opportunities also to learn from

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<sup>37</sup> See endnote vi.

initiatives around the world that have embodied the student voice in processes of academic review and improvement of teaching and learning in faculties, departments and higher education institutions<sup>38</sup>. Student membership of audit and review teams is a fundamental step in the process. Quality audit and review should itself embody the interrogation of the institution's systems for engaging students, examining in particular whether processes for involving students are genuine or superficial.

- 3.45 Shaping these systems must involve student representative bodies from the beginning. Active involvement and shaping by the NUS of the agenda for student engagement is essential.
- 3.46 Being a champion for higher education and students is a proper role for the Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills. However, the discourse of increasing disappointment among students with their experiences, as represented in some parts of the media, is undeserved. Current systems, including the student listening programme, should develop a sharper focus on enhancement. They should work in closer partnership with higher education institutions and with agencies such as the Quality Assurance Agency and the Higher Education Academy. Universities and colleges should methodically share examples of good practice in student engagement at programme level, and the QAA should scrutinise levels of student involvement in institutional quality systems. Measures of student engagement in learning communities such as the optional additional questions in the NSS might be more generally used to monitor progress.
- 3.47 The idea of joint responsibility of students and higher education institutions forms the foundation of a future student experience that will ensure a successful future for our universities and colleges in an increasingly competitive international environment. Sharing responsibility through partnership underlines the advantages of strength through diversity. In communicating the idea of diversity as an enrichment and not a threat to standards and quality in teaching and the student experience, government and the funding body should continue to argue that the meaning of excellence in a near-universal higher education system is established by a correspondence between the needs of different types of student and the higher education that they have the opportunity to enjoy. Higher education helps give meaning to the lives of most students who experience it; over and above the other advantages it confers on its participants and on the economy, this benefit deserves the widest possible distribution.

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<sup>38</sup> Swedish National Agency for Higher Education (2008).

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<sup>i</sup> The **University of Lancaster** Senate approved a policy on academic contact in January 2008. See [http://www.lancs.ac.uk/celt/celtweb/academic\\_contact](http://www.lancs.ac.uk/celt/celtweb/academic_contact)

<sup>ii</sup> The Assessment for Learning CETL (AfL) at **Northumbria University** encourages students to take responsibility for evaluating, judging and improving their own performance by actively using a range of feedback. [http://northumbria.ac.uk/cetl\\_afl/](http://northumbria.ac.uk/cetl_afl/)

<sup>iii</sup> Examples of institutions who have appointments at senior executive level whose responsibilities embrace the student experience include:

- Robert Gordon University** Vice-Principal and Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience and External Relations)
- University of York** Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Students
- University of Leicester** Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Students) with a particular focus on the student experience
- Brunel University, West London** Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Student Experience.

<sup>iv</sup> The **University of Huddersfield** has a Study Skills and Learning Support scheme which supports students in developing a wide range of skills such as research, problem solving, academic writing etc. see [http://www.hud.ac.uk/academic\\_support\\_tutors/](http://www.hud.ac.uk/academic_support_tutors/)

**University of Wales, Newport** has an on-line learning environment for students, My Learning Essentials, through which students can access a wide range of essential resources via the web. Resources include: latest University news, course materials provided by lecturers, own file storage space, information about the University and its facilities and services, study skills materials etc. Students can also create their own blog, ask questions, share photographs etc. [http://www3.newport.ac.uk/displayPage.aspx?object\\_id=3290&type=PAG](http://www3.newport.ac.uk/displayPage.aspx?object_id=3290&type=PAG)

**Oxford Brookes University** uses their VLE to improve student access to information through the Personal Information Portal, e.g. it gives student access to their personal details, course fees, timetable, record of marks, examination timetables etc. <http://www.brookes.ac.uk/students/new/pip/>.

<sup>v</sup> The SALTIRE centre at **Glasgow Caledonian University** is a hub of learning activities providing integrated student services which offer face to face contact for over 72 hours a week, group learning spaces, social areas and library facilities. <http://www.gcal.ac.uk/thesaltirecentre/index.html>

The Learning Grid at the **University of Warwick** is an integrated, flexible space open 24 hours a day aiming to facilitate independent learning. <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/library/grid>

Some CETL funding in England has been used to develop facilities which enhance the student learning experience. Examples include the Institute for Enterprise at **Leeds Metropolitan University** <http://www.lmu.ac.uk/enterprise/> and the Assessment Standards Knowledge exchange (ASKe) at **Oxford Brookes University** <http://www.business.brookes.ac.uk/learningandteaching/aske/>

<sup>vi</sup> **York St John University** believes a successful learning experience uniquely depends on a partnership between academic staff, students and support services and has established a *Student Experience Partnership* which sets out the University's and students' mutual obligations. [http://www2.yorks.j.ac.uk/default.asp?Page\\_ID=4561](http://www2.yorks.j.ac.uk/default.asp?Page_ID=4561)

The **Northumbria University** Student Learning and Teaching Awards offer students the opportunity to have their say about their learning experience and influence the future of learning. <http://northumbria.ac.uk/sd/central/ar/lts/enhance/apt/studentltawards/>

The Summer School at the **University of Cambridge** (developed with funding from the UK Centre for Materials Education) brings together academics and students to work in partnership to develop e-learning resources <http://www.materials.ac.uk/pub/case-cambridge.asp>

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**SPARQS** is a service funded by the Scottish Funding Council to assist and support students, students' associations and institutions to improve the effectiveness and engagement in quality assurance and enhancement in institutions across Scotland <http://www.sparqs.org.uk/>

<sup>vii</sup> The Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice at **York St John University** is delivered in Kenya and Bahrain and future plans include China.

<sup>viii</sup> **University of Glasgow** has a career path enabling promotion for teaching, with the following roles: University Teacher, Senior University Teacher and Professor. There is no expectation of research, but a requirement that staff should deliver research-informed teaching in a scholarly manner. <http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/humanresources/policies/p-z/uniteachers/>

<sup>ix</sup> 903,075 part-time students out of a total of 2,336,115 students enrolled at UK HEIs in 2005/6, representing 38.65% (Universities UK (2007) *Higher Education in Facts & Figures*).

<sup>x</sup> The **University of Manchester's** current review of undergraduate education and teaching and learning is considering teaching in a research intensive university and exploring how to link the outcomes of the review with the work of the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning in Enquiry-Based Learning at the University.

King's Graduate Project at **King's College London** includes a review of research-teaching interaction in teaching and learning to develop a flexible framework, for use across the College. It will identify processes to foster research-teaching links and will consider the possibility of an optional core curriculum, to be run alongside the normal degree course, focusing on independent and enquiry based learning and research skills.

The Curriculum Reform project at the **University of Aberdeen** is a review of education objectives, programme structures and curriculum content to develop a high quality and distinctive educational experience for undergraduate and postgraduate students which takes account of developing international approaches.  
<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/cref/>

The Melbourne Model at the **University of Melbourne** is based on six broad undergraduate programs followed by a professional graduate degree, research higher degree or entry directly into employment. The emphasis is on academic breadth as well as disciplinary depth.  
<http://www.futurestudents.unimelb.edu.au/about/melbournemodel.html>

<sup>xi</sup> In 2003 1.2% of UK students studied abroad, compared to the OECD average of 4.0. This percentage compares, for instance, to 2.5 in France, 2.8 in Germany, 8.7 in Ireland, 7.1 in Norway. Marginson and van der Wende (2007), p.19. <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/33/12/38918635.pdf>

A 2004 report on *International student mobility* reports that the UK has been the country with the largest imbalance of incoming and outgoing students within the Erasmus scheme. In 2002-3 the number of outgoing students fell to 7,956 compared with 11,988 in 1994-5. Sussex Centre for Migration Research, University of Sussex and Centre for Applied Population Research, University of Dundee (2004), pp.13-14.  
[http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2004/04\\_30/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2004/04_30/)

<sup>xii</sup> The following quotations are statements made by people who took part in the survey: 'A statement is made in the promotion documentation that teaching has equal weight to research but this is not the working practice at promotion panels'; 'There is no real appreciation of excellence in teaching for promotion purposes where even for senior lectureship you are really 80% assessed on research achievements'.  
Source: Higher Education Academy survey on reward and recognition of teaching in higher education, to be published.

<sup>xiii</sup> The proposed programme of general education at **Harvard University** offers students flexibility within a structure of requirements. It emphasizes subject matter, rather than academic disciplines, and it seeks to inspire lifelong interest in that subject matter with a pedagogy that relates material

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studied in the classroom to issues of wide concern to undergraduates. It seeks to equip students with critical attitudes, skills, and knowledge that they can apply everywhere in their lives.

[http://www.fas.harvard.edu/%7Eesefas/General\\_Education\\_Final\\_Report.pdf](http://www.fas.harvard.edu/%7Eesefas/General_Education_Final_Report.pdf)

The undergraduate curriculum at the **National University of Singapore** comprises both General Education modules and modules providing in-depth specialisation within a discipline. The General Education Modules have a two-fold emphasis on intellectual broadening and on critical and creative thinking. <http://www.nus.edu.sg/registrar/edu/UG/curriculum.html>

For the **University of Aberdeen**, **King's College London** and the **University of Melbourne** curriculum review, see endnote x.

The **University of Western Australia** has undertaken a major review of its course structures. The proposal is that undergraduate courses will include broadening units taught within an area (or areas) of knowledge other than the one in which the student's degree-specific major is taught. Emphasis will be on inquiry-based learning and research skill development, introducing students directly to the research culture of the relevant discipline and fostering independent study.

<http://www.coursestructuresreview.uwa.edu.au/>

<sup>xiv</sup> The **University of Warwick's** Reinvention Centre for Undergraduate Research is a collaborative project with **Oxford Brookes University** which funds undergraduate students to carry out research. Funding is also provided to academic and support staff to develop research-based teaching, promoting new teaching and learning methods focused on research-based learning and redesigning spaces and environments to support learning.

<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/sociology/research/cet/>

The **Imperial College London** Undergraduate Research Opportunities Programme (UROP) programme enables students to participate in research across a number of placements available in the departments of the College.

<http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/studenthandbook/facilities/urop>

Two goals of the Division for Undergraduate Education at the **National Science Foundation** in the USA are to support curriculum development by stimulating and supporting research on learning and to foster connections by encouraging faculty to combine teaching and discipline-based research.

<http://www.nsf.gov/ehr/du/e/about.jsp>

<sup>xv</sup> The Sunderland Language and News Group (SLANG) at the **University of Sunderland** is a social forum for international and UK students to improve their language and communication skills and cultural awareness. <http://osiris.sunderland.ac.uk/~slang/>

**Bournemouth University** has set up an English Conversation Club, a Global Cinema and a Global Café, which all encourage intercultural interaction between home and overseas students.

[http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/current\\_students/international\\_students/international\\_students.htm](http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/current_students/international_students/international_students.htm)  
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Further case study examples at

<http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/learning/international/casestudies>

<sup>xvi</sup> The STAR project (based at the **University of Ulster**) identifies and disseminates good practice in supporting students during periods of transition from one learning environment to another.

<http://www.ulster.ac.uk/star/index.htm>

The Department of Built Environment at the **University of Central Lancashire** has improved induction by designating a First Year Tutor responsible for establishing a coherent induction programme and by re-shaping the traditional induction so that it is group-focused and creates a sense of identity and belonging.

[http://www.cebe.heacademy.ac.uk/learning/casestudies/case\\_pdf/JohnAshtonYamnikar.pdf](http://www.cebe.heacademy.ac.uk/learning/casestudies/case_pdf/JohnAshtonYamnikar.pdf)

The **University of Bradford** ask students what they expect from university before they come. This allows the university to plan for what students expect and to shape expectations by opening the

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dialogue with those who have unrealistic expectations.  
<http://www.brad.ac.uk/developme/yourviews/index.php>

The **University of Leeds** Learning and Teaching Partnership Agreement, written in collaboration with students and staff, offers a clear vision of what students can expect from the University while studying at Leeds, and what the University can expect from them.  
<http://www.leeds.ac.uk/aqst/tsg/1pa.htm>

The **University of Birmingham** runs wide-ranging student induction programmes, including second-year 'parents' to provide preparatory support for first-year students. In addition to the student induction pack, the University runs personal tutoring systems through the Student Support and Counselling Service during the first weeks of term in order to answer any additional questions or concerns that incoming students may have.

The Peer Guide Scheme at **Bangor University** allows students to volunteer as Peer Guides to help others to adapt to university life. Peer Guiding is primarily aimed at supporting full-time first year undergraduates.  
[http://www.bangor.ac.uk/careers/students/peerguiding\\_new.php.en](http://www.bangor.ac.uk/careers/students/peerguiding_new.php.en)

In Scotland the First Year Enhancement Theme focused on the nature and purposes of the first year in higher education and how students can be engaged and empowered. A number of case studies are available on the website.  
<http://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/themes/FirstYear/default.asp>

<sup>xvii</sup> 'If you treat students as customers it will put the relationship between students and academics on the wrong footing – it should be a partnership between student and professional member of staff rather than a customer relationship, otherwise it will distort the relationship and create a 'customer is always right' mentality.' (President of the National Union of Students, 2008)

<sup>xviii</sup> 'It is characteristic of institutions of higher learning that they always treat learning in terms of incompletely-solved problems. They are engaged in a process of continuous enquiry... The teacher is not there for the sake of the student; both teacher and student are there for the sake of learning.' Humboldt (1810) (my translation after Elton).