Graduate Employment • Higher & Further Education • Careers & Employability
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Market Trends

Summer 2016

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The question as to whether the UK should stay or go has been comprehensively answered but Brexit’s wake has churned up a volatile wrack, with the gloomiest commentators predicting economic Armageddon and a generational clash that will permanently rupture the UK’s social fabric. Although reality will probably prove to be less catastrophic than that, no one can deny that we are living through remarkable times or that higher education has much to gain and lose from the rapidly turning political tides. Will Brexit cheat a generation of graduates of the career opportunities its predecessors toiled for granted? What does it mean for research funding? How does the white paper fit into the new dispensation? GMT has assembled a panel of expert witnesses to unpick the state of the sector post-referendum. If they do not pretend to predict the future, they at least provide an incisive anatomy of the recent past – not to mention a reliable guide to the new terrain as the sector takes its first tentative steps into a strange new world.

Professor Tristram Hooley provides a prognosis of the effects of Brexit on graduates whilst delivering a passionate polemic on the role of careers guidance in bringing about equality. Brian Hipkin follows with his popular column for GMT, this time discussing student support on the cusp of a new era.

Tony Bruce of UUK fame offers us a most welcome piece of expert analysis of the recent HE white paper. For those of us still confused, it surely is an insider’s guide!

Next, author and House of Lords Researcher Chris Waterman takes a prophetic look at the post-Brexit future of the sector, eloquent as ever in his prose.

The second half of GMT is dedicated to one of today’s hot topics: higher degree apprenticeships as alternatives to traditional HE. The Association of Colleges’ Head of HE Policy Nick Davy kicks it off with a look into the landscape of tertiary education in the UK, and a call for change. Association of Employment and Learning Providers’ Chief Executive Mark Dawe has one of the answers in the following piece, in which he showcases degree apprenticeships as real alternatives to the tradition route. We then delve deeper into their workings with a piece by CMI Director Petra Wilton offering a series of case studies into chartered management apprenticeships.

Our very own Keiron Tobin wraps this summer edition of GMT with an introduction to the Prospects HEDD DFfE-funded degree fraud service. Finally, we include our regular iCeGS update which you can find on the back cover.

I hope you enjoy the read. See you in the next academic year!

Aphrodite Papadatou
GMT Editor
NEWS IN BRIEF

• **Status of EU nationals:** The Cabinet Office released a statement setting out the current position on EU nationals in the UK and UK nationals in the EU, indicating no change to current policy after the referendum. [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

• **UK Technology Sector, post Brexit fears:** Seventy-four per cent of more than 1,200 members of the tech community think that the UK economy will suffer and a survey conducted by Tech City UK shows the evidence, although not all is doom and gloom. Find out the results at [www.techcityuk.com](http://www.techcityuk.com)

• **IPPR:** The think tank publishes two papers laying out post-Brexit options for the economy and migration that Theresa May will have to grapple with. It also suggests that questions of freedom of movement and access to the single market must be settled by all other parties if they wish to remain credible opposition. More of this at [www.ippr.org](http://www.ippr.org)

• **Universities UK:** The Vice-chancellors’ organisation submitted its response to the consultation on implementing year two of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), accepting the basic principles but calling for a more measured approach to costs and benefits. [www.universitiesuk.ac.uk](http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk)

• **HEFCE:** July saw the publication the organisation’s 2015–16 annual report and accounts, which sees it allocate £1.36bn in teaching and £1.52bn in research funding this year as it starts to face a new era under the white paper proposals. Download the report at [www.hefce.ac.uk](http://www.hefce.ac.uk)

• **BIS no more:** The news that FE and skills along with HE have been brought into a newly constituted DfE did eventually come in. Reactions from the sector have been generally positive. More at [www.tes.com](http://www.tes.com)

• **University applications:** UCAS published the figures at the latest deadline point in the 2016 application cycle of 30 June showing an increase in EU applicants and a slight fall in male applicants. Find out more at [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)

• **Preventing radicalisation in colleges:** The report by Ofsted praises general further education colleges and sixth forms for making good progress in implementing Prevent. However, it finds that a worrying number of providers, particularly independent learning providers, small providers and those working in isolation, are struggling to implement the duty. Read the report at [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

• **Above the limit:** Universities in England are already announcing a tuition fee increase above the £9,000 limit even before Parliament finished debating plans which would pave the way to raise fees. Tuition fees for 2017 are listed as £9,250 on Durham, Kent and Royal Holloway websites. Read more on this story at [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk)

• **CBI:** The organisation’s annual survey highlights increasing skills gap, showing that an increasing number of UK employers are worried that they will not be able recruit enough high-skilled employees. The survey of 500 employers found 69% were concerned about not being able to find enough highly-skilled staff, compared with 55% last year. Additionally it shows employers are not too keen on Brexit. [www.cbi.org.uk](http://www.cbi.org.uk)

• **Qualifications market trend:** Ofqual published its annual report on trends in the qualifications market in England, Wales and N. Ireland for 2014/15. The report shows a slight drop in the number of registered awarding organisations and available qualifications for the year. You can access it at [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

• **Living standards and inequality:** The Institute of Fiscal Studies published a fascinating report presenting an analysis of a new generation of people living in poverty in the UK. It highlights some ‘remarkable’ changes in patterns of low income showing that the ‘new poor’ tend to live in households where at least one person is working but where income levels and opportunities remain weak. See it at [www.ifs.org.uk](http://www.ifs.org.uk)

• **Academies unite:** Seven leading Royal Societies and academies including the British Academy, Royal Society and the Royal Academy of Engineering published an open letter to express their concerns about the future of research and innovation following the referendum. The letter calls for the government to help maintain the UK’s leading position in these areas. Read the letter at [www.acmedsci.ac.uk](http://www.acmedsci.ac.uk)

• **Careers, information and guidance:** The Education and Skills Sub-Committee had these core employability and personal development components under the microscope again. The Committee published a further critical report on careers, calling for a more coordinated and structured approach. You can access the report at [www.publications.parliament.uk](http://www.publications.parliament.uk)
GRADUATE CAREERS IN THE POST-BREXIT WORLD

TRISTRAM HOOLEY

Tristram Hooley, Professor of Career Education at the University of Derby, offers a prognosis on Brexit’s effect on the graduate labour market. He argues that careers guidance should play a role in bringing about more equality in the aftermath of Brexit and in empowering the generation of young people whose voices were not heard in the referendum.

Moving on from Brexit

One of the best bits of careers advice I’ve ever been given was to stop complaining about what has gone wrong in my life and to focus on what I could actually change. Hope, optimism and proactivity are better career strategies than complaining, regret and simmering resentment.

However, hope and optimism are likely to be in short supply amongst graduates who are about to begin their careers in post-Brexit Britain. Most students undoubtedly voted to remain part of the European Union. Seventy-one per cent of 18-24 year olds voted to remain as did 68% of those with a degree (Moore, 2016). But pro-European youth were outvoted by older, poorer, less educated Britons.

Students are therefore emerging into a labour market rocked by a fundamental political change that most of them opposed. What will this mean for their careers?

It is very difficult to answer this question, partly because predicting the future is impossible but mainly because Brexit is currently little more than a slogan. We know that we are going to leave the European Union but we don’t really know what that will mean. Will we continue to be able to trade with Europe, will the free movement of labour stop and what will these changes mean for where businesses decide to locate or relocate their operations? We do know that a lot of money currently flows from the European Union to support local economic development, social inclusion and youth transitions. Will the UK government match all of this funding after Brexit? Increase it? Spend it elsewhere or give it away in tax cuts? At present no one really knows.

What will happen in the labour market?

Firstly it seems likely that we will experience some kind of recession. The Bank of England (2016) has been trying to strike an optimistic note arguing that the UK economy has the capacity to withstand the risks of Brexit. But it concludes that ‘the outlook for UK financial stability is challenging’ and expresses concerns about whether people will want to continue to invest in Britain and whether there will be a crisis in the housing market as people fail to meet their mortgages. Today’s graduates therefore seem likely to be stepping into a world of increasing volatility without any guaranteed access to the good life.

Against this background of risk, change and crisis it is likely that existing workers will hang on to their jobs tightly. Meanwhile, employers will probably be more cautious about hiring, at least until the political and economic climate is a bit clearer. Early signs suggest that this is the case with a story in the Independent suggesting that job adverts fell by 700,000 in the week after Brexit (Sheffield, 2016). Graduates are therefore likely to find it more difficult to force their way into the labour market, particularly in more advantageous positions.

Immigration and its impact on the labour market was a major theme of the referendum campaign. If the Brexit settlement involves either stopping EU migration and/or repatriating the existing EU workforce in Britain we should expect that it will have some impact on the labour market. However, in a briefing on the labour market impact of Brexit issued before the referendum, COMPAS (2016) concluded that the links between unemployment and wage growth for UK-born workers and EU migration are pretty weak.

For UK graduates what is likely to matter is what occupations are being vacated and whether new graduates are credible to fill the vacancies that emerge. It seems unlikely that this will substantially increase the opportunities for domestic graduates. On the other hand, it is possible that Brexit will reduce the range of opportunities that are available to UK graduates to go and work in Europe. And of course this says nothing about the EU students who have studied in the UK and may still be planning to pursue their careers here.

In the long term

In a blog on the eve of the referendum, Charlie Ball (2016) drew an important distinction between the long term (where he sees most of the labour market problems getting smoothed out as Britain finds new way of being in the world) and the short term, where a shock to the economy is inevitable. Ball argues that ‘ordinarily, economic shocks hit lower skilled workers first but Brexit is expected to hit sectors such as financial services and HE particularly strongly’, and this will have major impacts for higher skilled workers (such as graduates). He estimates 6,000 fewer of 2016’s graduates will find work than usual and 12,000 fewer will find professional employment. PathMotion’s (2016) survey of graduate employers bears this out and suggests that when in doubt about the future, employers stop hiring.

Whether Ball is right about the long term is one of the important economic questions that Britain now faces. As the economist John Maynard Keynes (1924)
wrote: ‘In the long run we are all dead. Economists set themselves too easy, too useless a task, if in tempestuous seasons they can only tell us, that when the storm is long past, the ocean is flat again.’ In other words it is all very well to say to people ‘take your Brexit medicine, it’s good for you’ but the current generation of graduates are justified in feeling that the Brexiteers’ future is being bought at their expense. What is more, the idea that Britain’s economy will return to the mean in the long run is not at all clear. The government’s own analysis (HM Government, 2016) concluded that ‘the UK would be permanently poorer if it left the EU’ based on modelling scenarios over a 15-year period.

Of course all of this doom and gloom is not the whole story. As with any big change there will be opportunities as well as challenges. Britain will have to reinvent many of its institutions and regulations. Thinking this through is likely to be a major challenge and one which bright graduates will undoubtedly be able to make something of. What is more, it is at least possible that some of the Brexiteers’ predictions about the future will be borne out. It may be that some areas of the economy grow and that new trade deals and relationships are struck with countries outside of the EU. Britain will remain a major economy, a powerful political player and one of the richest countries in the world. It is not time to turn out the lights yet.

How can careers education respond?
What does all of this mean for those of us who are working with students and graduates to help them to think about their careers? Firstly, we need to help them to come to terms with the new reality. Brexit is no longer a political opinion, it is now a political and economic fact. Graduates have to think through what this means for their existing career plans. Beyond this, Brexit highlights the importance of helping individuals to develop career management skills like resilience and adaptability as well as the skills to research the labour market and interpret the signals that it is sending out. In times of change it is more important than ever to be able to read your context and respond to it.

I feel that this kind of response is not really good enough, however. If all we do is focus people on becoming more resilient we are ignoring some of the real issues. Brexit has caused a massive shake up of our country and of the political class. I think that lots of us feel that the way in which the population voted was about more than just how they feel about the European Union. The social scientist Ralph Fevre (2016) concluded that the way poorer people voted in the referendum was ‘a measure of their grim hope that any change in their country might just be a change for the better.’

If we’ve come to a point where the majority of the country feel the need to tip over the apple cart just to get their grievances noticed, something is very wrong. The fact that so many people feel that things can’t get any worse is an extremely worrying situation for one of the richest countries in the world.

Helping graduates build a career and a nation
What is the role of careers education and guidance at such a moment? I feel considerable moral ambiguity if all I am trying to do is to help students and graduates to come to terms with the awful inequality and unfairness of life or to think about how they can use their talents to come out on top despite the general social and economic collapse. There is a desperate need for forms of career education that help to ensure that everyone has a share of the nation’s prosperity.

In the post-Brexit world careers education needs to be helping to support inter-generational solidarity, greater social understanding and the capacity for the collective improvement of all of our lives. Brexit has shown that our careers are not entirely a matter of individual choice or talent and highlighted the fact that they are tangled up in politics and the lives of others.

Today’s graduates have to find jobs and access the good life but they also have a new nation to build alongside their careers. Careers education needs to be helping them to see both these individual and social goals and to think about how the two are best balanced.

References
Our regular columnist Brian Hipkin looks at the future of student support in a post-Brexit era and dives into the vast sea of data that holds such great challenges and opportunities for students, their advisers and university managers.

Children of a broken marriage
I am gripped by a sense of otherness. Overnight I have been moved from the unconscious majority to the conscious minority. I sit in the middle of a classic nightmare. I am suddenly in a world with which I am familiar but which is being bent out of shape.

A new normal that I cannot grasp reigns and try as I might I cannot wake up and go back to the way things were. We have left Europe. But as is the way with divorces, it is the manner of leaving that overshadows the act itself.

I was there at the beginning, I voted us in more than 40 years ago. As a baby boomer I know that I will be all right as I will have my memories. This will not be so for the generation of current students and those in waiting.

Their norms have been torn apart; their trust in the power of co-operation and the intrinsic ability of humans to sort things out, to solve their problems, has been damaged. For them it is as if the adults have switched off the internet; the foundation of their world has been rocked. Social media reverberates to the anguished cries of shock and betrayal; immediate recourse to the new tools of democracy produces on-line petitions to get the vote reversed; fantastic plans are hastily produced for an independent city state of London.

Existentialist problems
I have no idea how long this sudden sense of dislocation will last and how it will morph over the next few months. Current and new students will turn up at university in September against a background of leadership elections, financial crises, national fragmentation and real uncertainty in the world of higher education. Concerns over TEF will be nothing compared to the existential concern over the place of higher education in our new Brexit world – a world that distrusts experts, seeks a past that never existed and waits for a glory that will never come.

Yet I have been forcibly struck by the repeated desire expressed by Millennials to want to cooperate with each other – regardless of where that other has come from – that my despair at what is now denied to a whole generation has started to change into a strange kind of hope. In a new world we must believe in the emancipatory power of education, in the values of learning, questioning and co-operation. We owe it to a generation whom we seem to have just betrayed.

A new era in learning
Am I kidding myself that what we dish up at the moment by way of a ‘university education’ serves our students well? Will it help them to realise potentials, empower them enough to last a lifetime and take them through multiple career changes? I am not so sure, in part because I recently came across a piece of ‘science’.

Normally it is reassuring to get some science behind what you had always believed to be the case but if that belief was around the impact of ‘instrumentalism’ on learning and the student experience, then it is perhaps not so reassuring.

This is why I found myself sitting in a workshop at my professional organisation’s annual conference listening to a brilliant presentation about breaking down the barriers between professional services and academics. It was here that a reference was made to two theories of learning: ‘superficial’ and ‘deep’. I was nearly deafened by the sound of pennies dropping.

If students are becoming more instrumental in their approach to learning, then is this an unintended consequence of a ‘superficial’ approach to learning? Raised on a narrowing national curriculum and results-focused teaching, perhaps this is the new normal for today’s students. No wonder that student engagement is rapidly becoming the new zeitgeist.

Professionalising student support
What then is the new indicator of student engagement? Well, what better way to map it than data created by an increasingly bewildering set of measurements triggered by students themselves? Universities are about to find themselves knee deep in data, and if not they will soon be wishing that they were. What was once kept locked secure in the depths of the planning department and only allowed out in secret squirrel messages to HESA is now at the centre of everything.

This growth in student generated data is far from strategic. The proliferation of VLEs, attendance monitoring systems, Turnitin, advances in library systems, bursary management systems and sophisticated e-book platforms have been silently creating data for many years. When this is put into a coherent student-centred format it becomes gold dust.

The rise and fall and rise of the academic adviser
The alchemist in this process is that endangered species, the academic adviser. Their once central role of giving support and advice to students has declined in the face of professionalised
dedicated student services and the extent that students’ lives have grown more complex. The introduction of student loans, the necessity of part-time work, complex modular degrees and now visas have all rendered the academic adviser ‘amateur’ in a world that increasingly requires ‘professional’ advice and guidance.

However, across the sector universities are resurrecting systems of academic advising. Why? This is where the new world of ‘data everywhere’ opens up a potential game-changing opportunity to reinvent the role of academic advisor. Students’ issues, although experienced at the individual level, are remarkably predictable both in their nature and in the time they occur throughout the academic year.

The European Conference on the First Year Experience is now in its tenth year and boasts an impressive track record of research almost exclusively based on practical experience of the issues facing new students across European universities.

This research demonstrates that although the university systems they find themselves in may differ, students are a remarkably predictable lot. Yet whilst the first few weeks of academic life have benefited from fairly intensive scrutiny, the rest of a student’s time at university is massively under-researched by comparison, Prof Liz Thomas’s report ‘What Works’ an honourable exception in a comparative desert of evidence.

**Breaking walls and silos**
The rise of professional support services and sometimes consequential atrophied systems of academic advising has had some strange consequences. There has been a rapid growth in knowledge around the issues that face students today and the systems to support them but awareness of what is available now rarely makes it through the wall between the silos of ‘professional services’ and ‘academics’. The new possibilities of a data-empowered academic advising will always be less than it could be whilst this wall exists between the new data user (academic advisers) and those with knowledge on the human individual levels of students’ issues (professional support services).

In the wonderful new TEF-filled world of student generated ‘teaching excellence’ metrics it will be the new breed of academic advisers that will be given access to their advisees’ personalised data, probably via a brought-in commercial ‘dashboards’. However, they will be working blind unless they can cooperate across the divide with their student services colleagues who have the human-level information to transform that data into action.

After nearly a decade of increasingly superficial learning, instrumentalism and a focus on outputs such as degree outcomes and employment as measured by DLHE, a generation of students return this September to find themselves measured as never before. But what this data will be telling their tutors will be only half of the story. The betrayed generation are about to enter a world where facts are not valued and experts not noticed. Suddenly, even the ‘superficial’ may not be enough to keep our students engaged.
We were delighted to get our hands on a long-time expert’s analysis of what is seen by many as an opaque and often difficult list of policy proposals for HE. Here we have Tony Bruce’s guide to the HE white paper, written exclusively for GMT. Tony was Director of UUK from 1993-2010 with a long-term career in policy analysis. His areas of expertise include higher education policy, research and pensions.

The higher education white paper, Success as a Knowledge Economy: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice (2016), sets out the Government’s decisions and proposals for legislation following a recent consultation. The passage of the Higher Education and Research Bill, which was given its second reading in the Commons on 19 July, is unpredictable, with fees and institutional autonomy being obvious targets for the opposition.

The white paper argues that the sector ‘needs important reform to fulfil its potential and to sustain our global standing’. Although the UK is closer than ever to fulfilling Lord Robbins’ principle that ‘higher education should be available to all who are qualified by ability and attainment to pursue it’, more needs to be done. Issues that still need to be addressed include: uneven access; inflexible courses; value for money concerns; skill shortages; and variations in graduate outcomes.

**Competition**
The Government believes that by introducing more market competition and informed choice, better outcomes will be delivered. Greater competition will be facilitated by removing barriers which make it difficult for new providers to establish themselves. Easier entry will ‘drive up teaching standards overall, enhance the life chances of students; drive economic growth; and be a catalyst for social mobility.

Competition will be facilitated by simplifying regulation and creating a level playing field. A single entry route into the sector will be operated by the Office for Students (OfS), the new regulator that will replace HEFCE. New providers will compete on equal terms with established institutions as they will enter more quickly, choose their own operating model and award taught degrees as soon as they start. The student numbers criterion for university status is to be removed.

The possibility of market exit is not ruled out and all providers will need to have a student protection plan in place. This is intended to ensure that students can finish their studies even if their existing provider is unable to complete the delivery of the course.

The OfS will be responsible for operating a risk-based regulatory framework. The cyclic reviews undertaken by the Quality Assurance Agency will be replaced by risk-based assessments, with most providers seeing a reduced burden but a few seeing significantly more. If a provider no longer satisfies the OfS’s conditions, appropriate controls will be put in place, ranging from more regular monitoring to removal from the register of approved providers. The regulator is to be given a power ‘to enter and inspect’ a provider where there are suspicions of a misuse of public funds.

**Choice**
The OfS will have a duty to promote choice in the interests of students, employers and taxpayers. Enhancing choice is one of the main aims of the teaching excellence framework (TEF) that will measure teaching quality in institutions and, as with research, the outcome will be linked to funding.

Under the new framework, performance will largely be based on three measures of excellence: teaching quality; the learning environment; and student outcomes and learning gain. Metrics will be used where possible but additional information submitted by institutions will be assessed in a peer review process. The implementation of the TEF will be staged over a period of four years from 2016/17, with successful performance allowing institutions to increase their fees in line with inflation from 2017/18.

The white paper refers to former Prime Minister David Cameron’s ambition of doubling the proportion of socially disadvantaged people entering higher education between 2009 and 2020 and increasing the number of black and ethnic minority groups by 20 per cent by 2020. More progress is also needed on fair access, with only three per cent of disadvantaged 18 year-olds entering highly selective institutions. In support of these targets, the Director of Fair Access has issued new guidance to institutions and UCAS is consulting on the introduction of name-blind applications. Institutions will be required to issue information on applicants and data covering applications, offers and placed applicants at 132 larger institutions has already been released.

**Architecture**
The regulatory landscape is ‘complex and inefficient, with a number of bodies having similar functions that risk duplication and create a disjointed approach’. The OfS will assume the regulatory powers of HEFCE and OFFA as a single regulator. The present system where both HEFCE and the Government have responsibility for regulating different types of provider is to end. The OfS will have ‘clearer and consistent powers to regulate the sector, by attaching regulatory conditions to providers that enter the system’.

The regulator will be an ‘arm’s length’ non-departmental body focused on the student interest with a duty to promote
choice and competition. It will largely be funded by providers’ registration fees with a smaller public contribution. Apart from its regulatory functions, the OfS will also be responsible for allocating funding for teaching and for monitoring financial sustainability and efficiency. Legislation will give the OfS powers relating to the registration of new providers, the imposition of penalties and approving degree-awarding powers and university title.

A new body, UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), will allocate research funding. It will incorporate the functions of the seven research councils and Innovate UK as well as HEFCE’s role in managing the research excellence framework and distributing quality-related research funding. Recognising the risk to dual support that this change represents, the Government has decided to protect it by legislation. The UKRI board will provide strategic direction and advise the Secretary of State on the balance of funding between disciplines.

Under the new structure nine councils will be established with the aim of strengthening leadership in specific discipline areas. The Secretary of State will set budgets for the councils through an annual grant letter. Joint working between the OfS and UKRI will be protected, ‘reflecting the integration of teaching and research at the national level as well as the institutional level’.

Impact
The Government’s radical plans focus on boosting social mobility, facilitating entry (and exit) for providers and implementing a new regulatory framework. They are designed to support the enhanced role of the student as a consumer, with the sector now being largely funded by tuition fees rather than public grants. The reforms are likely to lead to rapid change as the market develops further and may well create risks for the sector’s reputation as well as for the autonomy and market share of established universities.

With student number controls now abolished, the changes will almost certainly lead to further rapid growth in new providers, but it is not yet clear what impact they will have on established markets. Their focus on older students – and their concentration on business studies – means that new providers may be well placed to benefit from any recovery in the market for mature students, both full and part time. There will also be opportunities for them to offer two-year degrees and degree apprenticeships where there may be unmet demand. Geographical cold spots, which until now have been neglected by new providers as well as existing universities, may offer further opportunities. If leading international universities were to offer courses in England this could also affect existing providers’ domestic markets.

The TEF is an essential component of the new market, providing students with essential information, enabling them to make more informed choices and address the problem of ‘lacklustre teaching and unacceptable variability in quality that is evident in the sector’. However, the difficulty of defining and measuring teaching quality means that the TEF will be an imperfect indicator in its early years. The white paper offers a broad definition of quality, ‘including the teaching itself, the learning environments in which it takes place and the outcomes it delivers’, but there are concerns about whether the preferred metrics actually reflect teaching quality.

Despite the decision to phase in the framework for longer than was originally planned and to introduce an element of peer review, there remain fears that a poorly designed TEF could damage the international reputation of UK higher education. The division of universities into three TEF tiers is a concern as it could be represented as official acknowledgement of the variable quality of the sector. This impression will be reinforced if universities are required to reduce their fees, having dropped a level in the assessment.

The creation of a new regulatory framework, which is a necessary consequence of the 2012 reforms, has a number of positive features including a single entry route and a risk-based approach. However, there will be concerns about the removal of the qualifying period for degree awarding powers and the changes to the criteria for university title, leading to wide variations in the definition of a university across the UK and raising questions about the student experience and the quality of provision.

The new regulator will have a much wider range of powers than HEFCE and these include the ability to impose specific conditions on providers entering the sector. Although these will be constrained by an obligation to ensure that they are proportionate to the regulatory risk, there is a danger of much greater intervention than is possible under HEFCE’s current powers. The fact that the regulator is also a funding body is a matter of concern: there is a clear conflict of interest between its role in protecting student interests and that of funding institutions which has not been recognised.

The new regulator’s duty to assess, or make arrangements for, quality and standards removes previous legislative safeguards which recognised that standards were the preserve of institutions rather than the state. Failure to meet these standards could mean that the new power to revoke the royal charters of established universities (as well as the degree awarding powers and university titles of new providers) is exercised.

Even if the reforms do not spell ‘the end of university self-regulation in the UK’, as one commentator has suggested, the direction of travel is clear. University autonomy will be eroded and the sector’s established relationship with the state will be significantly altered unless the Bill is amended as it passes through Parliament.
BREXIT AND AFTERWARDS

CHRIS WATERMAN

We take a look into the post-Brexit future of the sector, through the prognosticating eye of commentator and House of Lords Researcher, Chris Waterman. A specialist in education and children’s services, Chris established the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for the Teaching Profession earlier in 2016 and works with a number APPGs and other Parliamentary groups on child protection issues. Chris is Executive Director of Investors in Families and a published children and adult’s story-teller.

Après nous le deluge, et après...

I can often look at an ‘innovation’ or shift in policy, shake my grizzled head and say ‘plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose.’ For one, no two, no three times at the moment, I find myself unable to wheel out Alphonse Karr’s epigram. The first time was the impact of the vote to leave the EU. The second time was the almost immediate replacement of our Prime Minister – a very direct result of the referendum. The third time was the implosion of the Labour Party. In terms of the Parliamentary shenanigans that have followed the referendum, it seems that Karr’s other epigram is particularly true of politicians: ‘All people have three characters, that which they exhibit, that which they have, and that which they think they have.’ For some, a fourth character is present: ‘that which they display according to who they are talking to.’

All three seismic changes will have an impact on students, but the changes will also have an impact on most aspects of everyone’s daily lives. Because it seems no-one really believed we would vote to leave (given the surprise – in some cases horror – of most of the Brexiteers) and so there doesn’t appear to be a lot, if any, thought given to what happens next.

Labour leadership
This is the least immediate – and, for the moment, the least important – change. It seems likely that the implosion of the Labour Party will take a little time for that to have much effect. It is difficult to see what will emerge from the battle for the soul of the Labour Party. My own best guess is an, as yet, unnamed centre-left grouping will be cobbled together, flanked on its left by a small but vocal ‘old’ Labour Party, with a manifesto that will demonstrate to the Blairite ultras how right they were. It will take several years, I guess, before the new ‘party’ seizes power, or even shares it with the centre-right Conservative Party. The ‘new’ Old Labour Party will be the conscience of society but unlikely to be any more than that.

The ‘new’ government
The impact of the change of Prime Minister on students cannot yet be quantified but there are already some interesting straws in the wind. The sacking of Nicky Morgan as Secretary of Education is hardly surprising, given that, in policy terms, she was content to inherit Michael Gove’s legacy – to such an extent that she nailed her colours to his self-serving mast. The shift of higher education to the Department for Education makes lots of sense and the new ministerial team is likely to be more joined up on the education journey from early years to higher education. One interesting challenge for Justine Greening will be to ensure that the DfE books are balanced, which will be quite an innovation. Within her department’s budget, she will have to distribute the cash between the whole of her department.

The schools sector is vocal enough when it comes to arguing for a fair share of the budget, although there is no end in sight to who gets what between schools in an area and between areas.

Universities already act like crabs in a basket. In fact, there are several baskets, each containing a SIG (Special Interest Groups). One such group is the Russell Group, the most prestigious basket of them all. However, while the Russell Group acts to bat off the other groups, there is still huge competition between its members for favours from government. The research into the correlation between the age of the port and the amount of the grant is still to be done.

Post-Brexit
The most difficult of the questions to ask, let alone answer, is what leaving the EU will mean for students. I assume British students won’t have the same access to many of the European international programmes, including Erasmus and Comenius.

Another issue will be the free movement of students across Europe, with students coming to the UK already caught in some of the immigration cross-fire.

Coming to the UK to study is hardly likely to get easier for European students, and there might be a measure of negative reciprocity, depending on how the Brexit negotiations are going. In the short, medium and long term there may be an impact on some of the joint and international research projects that British universities are, at the moment, routinely involved in.

The ‘trickle down’ effect of any reduction in research activity will ineluctably be a reduction in the staffing establishment of universities. The impact on undergraduate studies, in terms of courses available is unknown, as is the impact on the availability of higher degrees and the undergraduate teaching and supervision that goes with them.

Post script
Potentially of greater significance than any of the above is the Higher Education and Research Bill, which had its second reading in the Commons on 19th July 2016.

No doubt the devils in the detail of that piece of legislation will be flushed out in the autumn, when it reaches the committee stage.
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Nick Davy returns to GMT to argue that too many policy and academic debates around increasing access and widening HE participation in England are narrow, focusing exclusively on progression to academic HE. In a poten, research rich polemic Nick argues that there is a need to widen out the debate to include issues such as the structure of our labour and HE markets, productivity and the supply and demand for skills within wider debates on social mobility. Nick is HE policy manager at AoC and an expert in the field of college HE.

An unsustainable model
The labour market in Britain is now characterised by what the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) calls the hourglass economy, formed from the following factors: an increase in lower-paid jobs in areas such as care, hospitality and leisure industries (what we might call administrative jobs and in trades and semi-skilled jobs at levels 2/3 often taken by computerisation and robots; and an increase in demand for intermediate (para-professional), senior and professional roles.

The UK labour market, though, deviates from the EU norm:

‘In most EU countries, growth in higher-skill jobs dominates over growth in low-skill jobs – across all countries for which there is data, the ratio is approximately two high-skill jobs for each low-skill job. The performance of the UK during this time period – 1996–2008 – is striking, with low-skill occupations increasing by a larger share than high-skill ones.’

Particularly worrying is that these low-skills sectors are associated with very poorly paid jobs – 20% of all jobs according to the OECD, 22% by Ewart Keep, only bettered – if that is the right word – by Canada, South Korea and the USA.

Many of our towns and cities also experience a low-skills equilibrium local economy, first coined by Finegold and Sosikice in 1988: a preponderance of low skilled jobs, low school results, low aspirations, lack of investment and the self reinforcing cycle continues. Many of the colleges I represent have large HE cohorts in those areas – Blackburn, Blackpool, Grimsby and Doncaster to name but four.

According to the TUC, just one in every forty of the net jobs added to the economy between 2008 and 2014 has been a full-time employee job. Over the same period, 24 in every 40 net jobs added have been self-employed, and 26 in every 40 have been part time. This of course leads to lower tax receipts and all the problems that brings, even with a high economic activity rate by international standards.

We also face a productivity crisis in the UK economy – at least 17% below what we should be if trends had continued on the same rate as before the recession. The Office for National Statistics in April 2015 said that, ‘that the absence of productivity growth in the seven years since 2007 is unprecedented in the post-war period.’

The hunt for skills
Yet skills shortages persist. I counted 34 occupations in the official Shortage Occupation List for Tier 2 of the UK Points-Based System that allows UK organisations to sponsor migrant workers. They include: nine categories of engineer and engineering technician; three categories of scientist; programmers and software development professionals; and some categories of welding trades and graphic designers – many occupations which do not require a three-year degree to work knowledgeable and competently.

Among apprenticeships which lead to a higher-level craft or technician level award (level 3 or above) less than five per cent are in engineering, manufacturing technologies or science, and only about one per cent in ICT.

At the same time, there is limited evidence from, for example, the researchers at SKOPE at Oxford University and OECD, that increasing the supply of academically-educated graduates leads to an increase in intermediate or higher skilled jobs, and increasingly labour market researchers are questioning that the supply of more degree-qualified people in an economy leads to greater productivity – the basis for much official and Treasury-thinking over the past thirty years, part driven by international league tables such as PISA and PIAAC and others.

According to UKCES: ‘Acute skills shortages combined with poor use of the skills we have, alongside limited work based routes to higher-middle skill jobs, are constraining competitiveness and investment’

Recent research by CEDEFOP economists, studying different types of qualifications – VET at different levels, apprenticeships and academic HE – also question the role of an over reliance on increasing the supply of academic graduates: (a) that countries with well established VET and/or apprenticeships systems are better at upskilling employees leading to quicker growth; (b) reliance on employers taking on ‘free’ academic graduates arrests the development of a quality continuing VET system; and (c) the presence of well-skilled intermediate and advanced employees raises the productivity of low-skilled employees and also allows senior staff to do less ‘fire fighting’, leading to better productivity.

Nick Davy

TERTIARY EDUCATION, SOCIAL MOBILITY AND THE LABOUR MARKET IN THE UK: A CALL FOR CHANGE

NICK DAVY


A call for modernisation

These are tentative conclusions but rightly ask some pertinent questions. And of course in the post-war period entry to more and more professions – teaching, nursing, arts and design, journalism etc. – is through the full-time academic route, effectively the state, until recently, subsidising business and other organisations for training it used to pay for in-house. The introduction of the training levy and a £3 billion contribution into apprenticeships in 2017 is a welcome corrective to this trend.

Something needs to change. Widening participation to elite universities in Britain has effectively stalled for a decade and interestingly, recent research at the LSE indicates that even those who enter elite professions from lower socio-economic backgrounds are less likely to be promoted and reach higher-level positions as those from upper-middle class backgrounds.

We need a step-change in how we structure tertiary education in England, providing significantly more people with a range of higher education and technical and professional education courses at a similar level of funding or tuition fee loan to academic HE and thereby – and this is the rub – significantly increasing access and widening participation.

Three streams and lifelong learning: a new model

The recent publication of the report of the independent panel on technical education and post-16 skills plan skills plan4 are policy moves in the right direction but much more needs to be done to develop the kind of three stream tertiary education system – academic, technical and apprenticeships – that the country needs if it is to meet the uncertainties created by the changes in the labour market and Brexit. This includes seeking permeability and transferability between the three streams.

It is probably the case that one of the best ways to achieve this is through some form of lifelong learning account that could be cashed in from 18 over one’s lifetime.

We must question this continued obsession with expanding academic higher education which arguably works against widening participation and, with admittedly exploratory evidence, may impact on the structure of our labour market and productivity. We must begin to explore what would be the optimum shape of the tertiary system to help economic growth and address low skills and low pay in many areas of the country.

Labour market challenges over the next twenty years demand that the tertiary education system produces more technically qualified diplomats and up-skill those presently in employment. This adjustment is required to replace ageing workers in level four and five occupations, meet the demands of the growth in higher-skilled occupations and an ageing population; and sustain the growth ambitions of successful sectors such as the creative industries and pharmaceuticals.

Many of these replacement and new job roles require technical and professional knowledge and skills at levels three to five, that do not necessitate a full honours degree – or the student experience and boarding school model associated with English higher education.

Creating a highly skilled workforce outside the university system

There is a now a considerable research and evidence base that England has a weak technical and professional education system in comparison to many OECD countries. And that the present young HE participation rate needs to increase and more employees re-skilled if the country is to create a more highly skilled workforce and move away from the low skills equilibrium that blights many communities and towns.

Evidence from OECD5, the history of HE and funding incentives in England confirms that in general most universities are unsuited to or uninterested in developing short-cycle technical and professional education at levels and durations below honours degree. There is recent evidence that many universities are now exiting the short-cycle foundation degree market.

It is crucial that successive governments over the next twenty years concentrate on developing this three-stream system and invest in creating quality flexible technical education and apprenticeships alongside academic HE.

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Apprenticeships at higher or degree level are becoming an increasing and essential part of the skills landscape, offering parity of opportunity for young people in a challenging era. Mark Dawe, Chief Executive for the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP), discusses the opportunities and challenges and looks forward to a bright future. The AELP is the national trade association representing providers involved in skills and employment delivery. Its members deliver the majority of Apprenticeships, Traineeships, English and Maths in the workplace and programmes for the unemployed including the Work Programme.

Introduction
Degree apprenticeships are relatively new and have been initially championed by forward-looking universities such as Sheffield Hallam and Manchester Metropolitan (MMU). But the traditional HE institutions, including members of the Russell Group, are now also in the process of setting up their own programmes.

Last year nearly 30,000 people of all ages participated in higher or degree apprenticeships, i.e. at level 4 or higher, but the attractions of the programme mean that this figure was already exceeded by January this year for the current academic year.

Indeed at our national AELP conference in June, the broadcaster Sky told delegates that within the next two years, its recruitment of degree apprentices was likely to outnumber its graduate intake.

The growing popularity of these apprenticeships is a game changer which sees high quality vocational learning opportunities presenting young people parity of opportunity alongside those who still wish to go down the academic route. The timing of this development is even more important following Britain’s decision to leave the EU because of the increased need to train home-grown talent to fill skills gaps.

For the young person, the financial considerations of the choice to be made at 18 are also more acute than ever. In fact, you could call it the £100,000 choice – the difference between earning while you are learning via an apprenticeship and a traditional university degree offering student debt, repayment of maintenance loans and three years of foregone earnings. Of course, the future earning potential of the latter remains highly attractive but ‘Generation Rent’ are now facing stark choices which require careful thought – who knows which route will bring greater financial reward in the future?

The evidence now suggests that an increasing number of young people are opting for higher or degree apprenticeships. A good example is MMU, which is looking to double its intake next year. It states that its degree apprentices were much better motivated and committed than its other undergraduates. The retention rates are also much higher.

A collaborative venture: challenges and opportunities
The picture is therefore very encouraging with other HE institutions looking to get on board, but at the AELP we warn that these apprenticeships must be based on proper work-based learning. They cannot be a rebadging of classroom or lecture room provision. Employers and the experts in work-based delivery need to be a key part of the delivery and the programme. We can see that pioneering universities in this field are recognising that employers must have a significant say in the programme design but we would add that there must be sufficient flexibility for a programme to meet the needs of different employers.

Other challenges include some apprentices having to travel considerable distances to the universities from their workplace to participate. The universities must also realise that employers want a say in who is being recruited on to the programme. One northern institution has said that they had applicants come forward with 2 As and a B at A Level which of course presented no difficulties; yet another was set to reject an applicant with only 140 points, only to be told very firmly by the employer that such were the applicant’s other attributes, the young person should be accepted.

It is areas such as recruitment, however, that offer scope for exciting new partnerships between HE institutions and independent training providers and FE colleges delivering work-based learning.

The expertise and experience of training providers in work-based learning will be particularly valuable in assisting other partners on the replacement of existing apprenticeship frameworks with new standards for each business sector.

The standards are part of a two-pronged approach to the reform of apprenticeships which the government started over three years ago, addressing both the quality of the programme and how apprenticeships are funded. A look at the standards at higher (levels 4 and 5) and degree level (levels 6 and 7) currently available shows a worrying shortage of approved degree-level standards2. Yet still for many sectors, there are none available and nor will they be when the apprenticeship levy is introduced for large employers in April 2017.
This lack of standards must be addressed, and our concern is that expectations are being raised which may not be satisfied. We believe a solution lies in slowing down the replacement of the frameworks and using these as the building blocks for further growth. We need the new standards urgently for we have a golden opportunity to transform higher learning and work based learning – and the skills base of a post-Brexit country.

**Unravelling the apprenticeship levy**

It has been very interesting for us at AELP to see the narrative on the impact of the levy on higher level apprenticeships change over recent months. The levy will be calculated on 0.5% of the payroll bill of all employees across the whole of the UK. However, employers will not pay the first £15,000 of the levy.

Therefore the annual payroll bill has to be £3 million before an employer starts paying. It is estimated that more than 20,000 large organisations will be within the levy’s scope, including public sector employers such as NHS trusts and universities. These employers will pay their levy into a digital account on a monthly basis from April 2017 and with a 10% top-up added by the government, they will be able to reclaim all of the money for training apprentices.

Critics of the levy had initially predicted that in the rush to reclaim their money, employers would adopt a ‘pile ‘em high’ approach where they would maximise the number of apprentices at the lower, less expensive levels. The critics, including certain prominent academics, have argued that this would lead to an overall lowering of programme quality and a severe damaging of the brand. But the reality is that many employers have adopted a sophisticated strategy which looks beyond the immediate financial implications and they have been savvy how the levy can help them meet skills shortages and increase productivity over the longer term. Large businesses such as Transport for London, Nestlé, Lloyds and Astra Zeneca, are indeed committed to degree apprenticeships and we expect more to follow suit as they shape their levy responses.

It is plausible that eventually 50% of the levy could be spent on higher or degree apprenticeships. The universities and employers report that there is certainly a large appetite for them among young people. However, we need the government to address quickly a key issue to help the higher level volumes to escalate further and this relates to learner eligibility for government co-investment in a degree apprenticeship. If the applicant already has a degree, say, in modern art, does this stop the person from doing a degree apprenticeship with government funding in a skill desired by their employer? So far, the government has not offered an answer to this question.

**Keeping smaller employers engaged**

Here is another big issue which requires a solution: degree apprenticeships should not be the exclusive preserve of large employers. Unfortunately, the way that the levy system is being set up means that this is a real danger. Such an outcome would not be in the interests of young people who live in areas where the local economy is predominantly made up of small- and medium-sized businesses.

The problem is that SMEs, as non-levy payers, will have their apprenticeships funded differently under the new system that begins next April. Ministers had previously said that the government would retain a separate pot of money to pay for these (the government currently has a budget of about £1.5bn to fund apprenticeships of all ages with at least half funding the future non-levy payers) but now the policy is that the entire programme should be funded from the proceeds of the levy. This means that SMEs can only access funding that has not been used up by the levy payers.

Although employer research has been undertaken, the government does not have a clear picture of how much funding will be left over. The levy is forecast to raise around £2.5bn for England by 2020 which, on the face it, looks encouraging because it is £1bn larger than the current investment in the programme. But if there is little or no money left for SMEs, the chances of large numbers of higher or degree apprenticeships being offered by these employers will be seriously diminished.

**A bright future**

While there is this proviso about SME engagement, the overall picture for higher and degree apprenticeships looks extremely bright. Given the major financial considerations facing them, young people are being given a real and meaningful choice for high level learning that can lead to equally rewarding career prospects. If universities, employers and providers work closely in partnership, the potential to respond positively to the growing demand from applicants is enormous and we must not let this opportunity pass to give young people a better choice over their futures.

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1. Find out more information at www.aelp.org.uk
MANAGEMENT APPRENTICESHIPS: A STUDENT’S AND EMPLOYER’S CHOICE

PETRA WILTON

Degree Apprenticeships are seen by the government as vital to the UK economy. We asked Petra Wilton, Director of Strategy and Affairs at the Chartered Management Institute (CMI), to tell us about the management apprenticeship, which is designed to develop a pipeline of excellent managers for UK Plc. The CMI works with employers across the UK to deliver management development and it remains the only awarding body in the country permitted to award Chartered Management status. For the fuller picture, this feature includes two case studies of current Chartered Management Degree Apprentices (CMDA).

Last November saw the launch of the first Degree Apprenticeship for management under the Government’s new Trailblazer programme. Launched to bridge the divide between education and workplace for those entering first-time management roles, the Chartered Manager Degree Apprenticeship offers the triple guarantee of a quality degree, on-the-job experience and professional Chartered status, providing evidence that they can make a measurable impact in their organisation.

The Chartered Manager Degree Apprenticeship is ideal for both school leavers and those already employed in management roles but often with no previous management training or support. For too long courses such as these have been the exception rather than the rule; 71% of UK organisations admit they currently fail to effectively train first-time managers. Employers in turn criticise existing management training as being too expensive and insufficiently tailored to the needs of the workplace.

The ‘accidental manager’
This failure of communications between educators and employers has long been a missed opportunity, and has cost us all dearly. Eight out of 10 UK managers have no leadership training and so it is little surprise that the UK falls behind the US and Germany in terms of leadership and management capability.

Here in the UK, it is estimated that bad management costs the country £19bn a year. Poorly trained managers waste time, and waste potential. These ‘accidental managers’, thrust into leadership situations without the right skills, sap our patience and productivity, and are all too common. Indeed, two-fifths of employees rate current line managers as ineffective. However, the fact that so many leaders themselves have often failed to pursue appropriate qualifications is conveniently overlooked.

But it doesn’t have to be this way. Professionally accredited Chartered Managers deliver an additional £391,000 of value to their employer, according to our 2015 Mapping Management Excellence research.

Employer-led apprenticeships
Of course, such criticisms levelled at the lack of management training aren’t unique, with educators and employers long at loggerheads over the quality of the skills of those entering the workforce. Realising this, the former Prime Minister, David Cameron asked employers themselves to work together with the education sector to design the new apprenticeships to help meet the Government target of three million apprentices by 2020. For the new Chartered Manager Degree Apprenticeship, this has seen Serco and Civil Service Learning lead 40 employers and universities to develop the new management and leadership apprenticeships. The new degree-level apprenticeship unites the status and commitment of ongoing development from a professional body with the quality of a degree from a top university.

This joint approach appears to have paid off, with many other major employers including Nestlé, Pizza Hut, Pendragon, Boots and Barclays already involved, and small businesses are also starting to take up the offer. But most importantly the first degree apprentices are already starting their learning in the workplace.

Investing in the next generation
Employers will now have a great opportunity to use apprenticeship funding to help invest in professional management development to really drive up productivity. The suite of options means that employers can create apprenticeship programmes that embed professional qualifications and membership to develop their next generation of managers, covering both school leavers and existing staff. And there is no need to wait, as the Government will fund up to two-thirds of the costs under the current trailblazer funding.

For more information visit: http://apprenticeships.managers.org.uk

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CMII MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP APPRENTICESHIPS

Thomas Summerfield, Age 19
Service Advisor, Pendragon Plc

In April this year (2016) Thomas joined Pendragon, one of the UK’s leading operators of franchised motor dealerships. He is one of 6 employees to join the first round of Chartered Manager Degree Apprentices (CMDA) at the company, taking on the role of Service Advisor at dealership Evans Halshaw. At the same time he is studying through Nottingham Trent University to gain a Degree Apprenticeship and gain Chartered status.

It’s a different route to the traditional university path that a lot of my friends have chosen, but this course is really setting me up for my future. I’m getting the rare opportunity to work at the UK’s leading automotive retailer, gain a degree in Business Management and Leadership from Nottingham Trent University and become a fully qualified Chartered Manager.

The degree apprenticeship is putting me ahead of other students who may come into a full time position after they graduate. Being able to work and study at the same time means I’m gaining a deep knowledge of the company and learning a range of vital skills, such as business acumen and a growing confidence in the workplace environment.

Of course I’m looking forward to making the most of the huge number of personal benefits that I’ll gain from the course, but I think that it’s great for Pendragon too. Ultimately, it’s investing in quality professional management for its future leaders – a win-win for everyone involved.

We get so much support throughout the course; from study leave to helpful mentors, through to being encouraged to reach out to senior level staff and the learning development team if we have any problems. I’m reassured in the knowledge that at the end of the course, on top of having a degree, I’ll be on the path to becoming a fully qualified Chartered Manager. It really is a fantastic career accelerator.

The new Chartered Manager Degree Apprenticeship has been developed by a group of 40 employers and universities, headed by Serco and supported by the Chartered Management Institute (CMI).

Najoua Chekaya, Age 29
Regional Manager, Pure Gym

As a teenager, Najoua, ‘Naj’ Chekaya was fascinated by fitness. Her aunt used to work as an instructor and Naj would help her practise and learn new routines for Body Combat and other gym classes.

This interest stayed with her and she secured a part time job as a cleaner in her local leisure centre to be in the environment she loved. After doing A Levels, Naj worked on reception and then undertook an NVQ Level 3 in Personal Training as well as training in the various skills required to teach classes such as Pilates and Body Pump.

Now 29, Naj is a Regional Manager for Pure Gym looking after 21 sites across London and Essex. She line manages the gym managers and supports them to run the club.

I started at Pure Gym in October 2012 as a Gym Manager then I was promoted to Senior Manager and two years ago, Regional Manager.

I was encouraged by our Learning and Development team to undertake a Level 5 Apprenticeship in Management and Leadership through Intec Business Colleges and I thought it would be useful in my role and good to have on my CV.

Carrie, my tutor, and I meet once a month to review my assignments but I undertake most of the study at home.

Yes, it takes a fair amount of dedication when you’re working full time, but I tried to incorporate as much as possible of the course into my work, which helped a lot. I was lucky enough to be seconded onto the team working on the LA Fitness acquisition which was really interesting and helped with the change management aspect of the qualification.

For my assignments, I needed to undertake research myself as they involved things I’d never considered before. This research was probably the aspect of the learning that I enjoyed the most.

Find out more at www.managers.org/ukl/apprenticeships
INTRODUCING HEDD: THE UK’S OFFICIAL DEGREE FRAUD SERVICE

KEIRON TOBIN

Prospects Higher Education Degree Datacheck (HEDD) runs a degree fraud service, funded by the Department for Education, which helps shut down bogus operators and advises universities and employers on how to check degree certificates and deal with degree fraud. Degree Fraud Officer Keiron Tobin explains how this works.

HEDD has been providing a secure online candidate verification service for higher education since 2011. HEDD evolved in a shared service context and to begin with was all about efficiency – HEDD simplifies the process by which employers verify candidate credentials and saves participating universities hundreds of staff hours a year.

As HEDD gained ground, however, it became apparent that it had a role to play in combatting the growing threat posed by certificate and institution fraud. Each week, the HEDD support team received fake certificates or were alerted to the ‘existence’ of another made-up university.

These encounters with the world of degree fraud were converted into press releases which informed the educational work HEDD carried out with employers, who need to practice 100% observation of verification, and the educational work carried out with universities, who need to understand just how vulnerable their graduates and their institutional reputations are to degree fraud.

It was only a matter of time before a formal service developed. On 1st June 2015, Jo Johnson, Minister for Universities and Science, announced that HEDD had been appointed by DfE to clamp down on bogus providers, degree mills and fake certificates.

‘It is right that we are clamping down on fraudulent applications and bogus colleges,’ Johnson said. ‘We have stopped over 870 of these institutions from recruiting international students since 2010 and will take all steps necessary to protect international students from rogue providers and dodgy operators.’

The HEDD degree fraud service was born. Fake degree certificates are passed onto the HEDD team, who investigate the source and whenever possible close the provider, with the help of law enforcement agencies. Over the past year HEDD has closed 32 websites violating the Education Reform Act 1988, including fake UK universities. Funding has been secured for the service’s second year.

The HEDD degree fraud team has been working with law enforcement agencies in the UK including the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau (NFIB), National Crime Agency (NCA) and the Metropolitan Police Service Amberhill to force closure of fake universities.

Success has so far been limited to the UK as perpetrators who are registered outside of the UK cannot be prosecuted (eighty per cent of the fake universities reported to HEDD were based overseas) but the remit for year two of the service permits collaboration with international agencies to deal with offenders in-country.

HEDD has joined the Groningen Declaration Network, an alliance of government, not-for-profit and private organisations around the world involved in the verification of higher education credentials and exchange of data.

There is still an educational war to win – many employers consider checking the authenticity of a degree certificate an optional extra and there are still employers out there who don’t even ask to see a candidate’s certificate. In 2016, HEDD produced a degree fraud toolkit for universities, swiftly followed by a toolkit for employers. The toolkits are designed to help universities and employers understand the nature and prevalence of degree fraud and develop preventative policies.

HEDD is also working with the sector to create a policy on degree fraud that can be adapted to all HE institutions. Marketing, admissions, legal, registry and human resources have a part to play in combatting degree fraud and should be involved in shaping internal policy.

HEDD representatives have spoken to universities’ social media teams and careers services about the potential dangers of their students posting their degree certificates online.

Like passports and birth certificates, degree certificates are legal documents and should not be placed on social media. Cifas recently reported a 57% increase year-on-year of identity fraud and placed emphasis on social media as fraudsters ‘hunt’ online.

Amazon have agreed to monitor their site and take immediate action to stop the sale of fake certificates.

HEDD is also working with the authorities to see greater pressure applied to eBay sellers who still sell ‘novelty’ certificates. HEDD was featured on the BBC Radio 4 programme You and Yours to discuss the issues of degree fraud and increase awareness among employers and universities.
Top toolkit tips and resources
You can download the university and employer Advice and Guidance on Degree Fraud toolkits from the ‘About us’ section on www.hedd.ac.uk

Copycat websites
Some bogus providers emulate genuine UK HE providers by setting up copycat websites using a real university’s name, lifting information or images from the genuine site. They generate revenues from enrolment fees or premium phone lines by duping applicants who believe it is the genuine university, but also allowing fraudsters to gain plausible, but fictitious credentials. Degree certificates and transcripts are issued by the operator and the websites offer verification services for employers to check their ‘graduates’.

Fake certificate sites
There are a multitude of websites offering ‘novelty’ or ‘replacement’ degree certificates for as little as £7. These websites carry disclaimers about not using the documentation to make fraudulent misrepresentations in order to avoid prosecution. However they are breaching the copyright and trademarks of the universities whose certificates they are imitating. They often base their templates on real certificates. There are lots of images of real certificates innocently posted online by graduates on Twitter, on social media sites like Instagram and Facebook and lifted by fake certificate sites.

Individual fraud
Even if they don’t buy fake documents from a third party, anyone who falsely creates a certificate or alters a genuine document from a real university – changing the name, subject, qualification or classification – and presents the documents as real is still committing fraud. These are hard to spot, as they are usually based on real certificates. The only way to verify their authenticity is to check with the issuing institution or HEDD. Making or supplying such documents is an offence in itself and constitutes fraud. Presenting this documentation as genuine in job applications constitutes fraud by false representation and can lead to prosecution resulting in prison sentences of up to ten years.

How to spot a fake certificate
- Check the spelling and language – misspellings are a common indication of a fake certificate
- Check that the university is accredited using the authenticate tool on www.hedd.ac.uk
- Check the terminology – fakes often use American English wording such as ‘Dean list’, ‘fall’ and ‘winter’. ‘Cum laude’ is common instead of ‘honours’ as is ‘matriculation date’ instead of ‘start date’

Share false documents and fraud evidence
Degree fraud is a borderless, global problem. In order for fraud to be investigated and reduced it is important to share information. Keep records of fraud cases and any action taken. Information can be passed on to HEDD using the fraud helpline on 0845 077 1968, via the online reporting form www.hedd.ac.uk/contactUs.htm or through the HEDD Jiscmail group HEDD@Jiscmail.ac.uk

As well as the database of bogus providers, HEDD has a repository of fake certificates. Share information and advice through professional networks within the HE sector e.g. the Student Records Officers Conference; Academic Registrars Council; Association of University Administrators; Universities Human Resources; Association of Legal Practitioners; Jiscmail groups and so on. Share with the national agencies like CIFAS and Amberhill, Action Fraud and the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau as detailed in the previous sections. If the information concerns individuals ensure that the policy on sharing has been notified on application or consent forms e.g. ‘Information may be shared with law enforcement and related third parties for the purposes of fraud prevention’.

Social media
Keep up to date with HEDD at https://heddblog.wordpress.com HEDD is on Twitter @HEDD_UK and LinkedIn, where you can connect with us by searching ‘Higher Education Degree Datacheck’. For more information please visit www.hedd.ac.uk
iCeGS Update

iCeGS is well-known for its research and development work. What readers of GMT might also be interested to learn is that iCeGS also hosts or co-organises a range of events aimed at development and updating of career professionals.

Inaugural lectures
These are lectures are where a Professor or Visiting Professor is ‘given the floor’ to talk about anything s/he is interested in.

Typically inaugural lectures mark the official beginning of a professorship and therefore tend to provide an opportunity for commentary and reflection on research, policy or practice themes (or all three at once).

We have had three such lectures recently: Professor Tristram Hooley, Visiting Professor Jim Bright and Visiting Professor Wendy Hirsh. You can access videos, slides or papers at the links.

Dr Wendy Hirsh

Prof Tristram Hooley

Prof Jim Bright

Associates meetings
These are gatherings of iCeGS Associates that take place three times per year and involve discussion, information-sharing and updates on a wide range of career-related topics. The Associates comprise career professionals from schools, colleges, higher education and workplaces – so our discussions are lively and productive. As you can see in the photograph, these meetings provide an opportunity to grab a copy of the latest reports. The next Associates meeting is scheduled for October 26th.

Annual lectures are held and comprise a guest speaker followed by light refreshments and networking. Last November Visiting Professor Jim Bright of the Australian Catholic University spoke about career chaos and the perfect CV; on October 26th Dr Rei Thomsen, Associate Professor at Aarhus University in Denmark will give the 2016 Annual Lecture and also conduct a staff development workshop.

Finally, we also contribute speakers to lots of conferences and there is a particularly interesting one coming up in September in which we are collaborating with NICEC entitled Rethinking Career Development for a Globalised World, with an amazing line up of practitioners and researchers. We hope to see you there.

If you would like more information on upcoming events please contact me.
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