

This week there were lots of announcements and important changes for the higher education sector. BIS has published the [White Paper](#) which sets out the government's proposals for higher education following on from the Green Paper in 2015. [The Higher Education and Research Bill](#) was also published this week. You can view a summary of all the key points from both the White Paper and the bill [here](#).

Below are some updates on the key areas that came out of both the paper and the bill.

TEF

- Universities will be awarded a *Meets Expectations, Excellent or Outstanding* rating.
- Year one (2016/17)- all providers with any form of successful QA award will receive a rating of 'Meets Expectations'
- Year Two (2017/18)- trial year. The core metrics will be student satisfaction scores (National Student Survey), graduate outcome data (Destination of Leavers from Higher Education), and continuation rates.
- Year Three (2018/19) will include the incorporation of other metrics as a result of the TEF technical consultation and will include pilot assessments at disciplinary level.
- Year Four (2019/20) will be the first year in which disciplinary level assessments take place and will be the earliest the government intends to also include taught postgraduate courses.
- The TEF will allow for inflationary increases to tuition fees for participating institutions that meet basic standards in 2017-18 and 2018-19, ahead of the introduction of differentiated caps in 2019-20 (fee caps are yet to be set).

Agencies

- HEFCE is closing and is to be replaced by an Office for Students (OfS) which will commence on 1st April 2018.
- The Office for Fair Access will be subsumed into OfS
- HEFCE and OFFA staff will transfer across to OfS which will also have a new board.

Research

- A new body - UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) will replace Research Councils UK and will merge the research councils and Innovate UK into this "single, strategic research funding body".
- A brand new body called Research England will be created under UKRI and will take responsibility for managing the REF and delivering QR, although it will maintain its own governance structure to ensure that the dual support system is maintained.
- The Secretary of State may by regulation add/omit/change the name of a council.

Quality

- The OfS will have oversight of not just the regime for quality, as Hefce did, but also of standards.
- The government will be abolishing the previous process of cyclic quality review where every provider, regardless of risk, was reviewed after the same number of years. Rather, quality reviews will only occur when triggered by a provider seeking to gain approved status, approved (fee cap) status or Degree Awarding Powers (DAPs) as a result of a previous provisionally satisfied assessment, or if annual monitoring activity gives cause for concern.

Additional points

- The OfS will take over responsibility for granting DAPs and University Title for English institutions from the Privy Council.
- Providers that receive public funding will continue to come under the scope of FOI, while those that do not receive public funding will not.
- All universities will be required to publish detailed information about application, offer and progression rates, broken down by ethnicity, gender and socio-economic background.
- The OfS will be able to validate degrees

Additional consultations

Alongside the White Paper, the government has released two consultations, both of which BU will be responding to.

- The government is seeking views on student's being able to more easily switch university or degree, as well as views on accelerated courses. [Accelerated courses and switching university or degree](#)
- The government is also seeking views on the operation of the Teaching Excellence Framework in year 2, including the assessment framework and process. [Teaching Excellence Framework: year 2](#)

Labour

Labour has launched a campaign to stop David Cameron lifting the cap on university fees in response to the White Paper and bill. Mr Corbyn has said he would abolish tuition fees by raising £10bn of taxes from businesses or higher-earners. [Jeremy Corbyn launches campaign against student tuition fees and labels proposed hike 'a tax on education'](#) (*The Independent*).

Teaching quality research

BIS has released data that looks into views on teaching quality in higher education from applicants and graduates. 93% of applicants said that access to transparent and reliable information about universities is important, and 84% of graduates asked said that they believed students should be able to access independent assessment of a university or course's teaching quality. You can view the data [here](#).

For more information on the reforms to higher education, you can have a look at our [intranet pages](#) and a post on the [research blog](#).