

### THIS MONTH'S HIGHLIGHTS

Welcome to the latest issue of **UKDigest**. It provides a comprehensive summary of recent developments across a wide range of learning and skills-related topics. Included in this edition:

- The ink has barely dried on GCSE exam papers, but there is already confusion about the new 9–1 grading system that is being phased in. If you are confused too, you can check out the DfE's factsheets. [p2]
- The higher education sector is predictably up in arms about the first results of the new Teaching Excellence Framework. Some institutions are saying they will appeal. In the meantime, UK universities are slipping in the rankings, but Sir Michael Barber is looking forward to a future Golden Age. [pp16–17]
- There have been several studies of employers' intentions around apprenticeships, suggesting a positive trend in terms of hiring, but only for those aged 18+. Vacancy statistics also show rising 16–18 applications, while fewer vacancies are being posted. [pp19–20]
- Social mobility continues to be in the spotlight, with a new barometer and employer index, as well as an assessment of government policy. [pp22–23]
- Scotland is planning a radical shake-up of school governance; details are on p25.
- And finally, of course, there has been an election. We have a run-down of key ministers, and the details of the Queen's Speech, along with some interesting findings on where MPs went to school [pp23–24].

**Elaine Hendry**

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**UKDigests** are designed for professionals who need to keep abreast of the world of learning and skills. They provide monthly intelligence on research, policy and practice across government, education, business and the wider community. Every effort is made to ensure that the information presented is accurate, but no liability can be accepted for decisions made on the basis of the information given.

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## THE EMPLOYMENT SITUATION

UK [Labour market statistics](#) for February–April 2017:

- **Employment rate:** 74.8%, the joint highest since comparable records began in 1971.
- **Number in employment:** 31.95m, up 109,000 on the quarter and 372,000 on the year.
- **Unemployment rate:** 4.6%, down 0.4ppt on the year, and the joint lowest since 1975.
- **Number of unemployed:** 1.53m, down 50,000 on the quarter and 145,000 on the year.

## YOUTH PARTICIPATION

The DfE has published [updates](#) to the national participation figures released in June 2016, and provisional estimates for the end of 2016.

- The overall proportion of 16–18 year-olds not in education, employment or training (NEET) fell by 0.5ppt in the last year to 6.0%, the lowest rate since consistent records began.
  - The largest annual change was seen at age 18 where the NEET rate fell by 1.5ppt to 9.8%.
  - The rate also fell at age 16, by 0.3ppt to 2.9%.
  - At age 17 the rate increased by 0.3ppt to 5.2%; the increase was driven by a large fall in the employment rate of those 17 year-olds not in education and training (NET).
- The proportion of 16–18 year-olds in education and work-based learning (WBL) increased by 0.3ppt to 81.9%, the highest level since consistent records began in 1994.
  - Participation increased to record levels for 16–17 year-olds and remained stable at age 18.
  - The largest increase was seen at age 17, up 0.6ppt to 88.0%; at 16 the rate was 94.3%; at 18 it was 64.2%.

## THE ECONOMY & BUSINESS CONFIDENCE

A [post-election poll](#) of 700 members of the Institute of Directors suggests a major drop in business confidence, and concern over the impact of political uncertainty on the UK economy.

- 20% were optimistic about the UK economy over the next 12 months, down from 34% in May; 57% were either quite or very pessimistic, up from 37% in May.
  - The 'net confidence' score had fallen from -3 to -37.
- Asked to prioritise three policy areas for the new government, 49% chose education, skills and training, second after 'reaching a new trade agreement with the EU' (72%).

KPMG has published its third annual [Global CEO Outlook](#), investigating the challenges and opportunities faced by nearly 1,300 CEOs leading the world's largest businesses.

- 65% are confident about global economic growth during the next three years, down from 85% in 2016.
  - 69% are confident about their own industry's prospects for growth, down from 85%.
- CEOs are more confident in their understanding of new technologies than they were in 2016, although competition for expert talent is fierce.
  - As they embed cognitive technologies, 58% on average are expecting a slight or significant growth in the number of employees across 10 key roles.
- Only 47% expect their number of employees to increase by more than 6% in the next three years, down from 73% in 2016.
  - However, the proportion who are increasing investment in recruitment has risen to 75%, again suggesting that businesses are increasingly looking to hire more specialised talent.

## INNOVATION & ENTERPRISE

Innovation charity Nesta has published the findings from [a workshop](#) that enabled social enterprises, charities and community organisations to experiment with a set of tools for innovation.

- The event took four questions that Nesta has found helpful for change-making organisations, and matched each question to a tool or approach:
  - Why am I doing this? The change I want to make... using a theory of change
  - How will I achieve this? Addressing mindset and approach... using experimental culture
  - Who will this benefit? Getting closer to your users... using human centred design (HCD)
  - What am I doing? Tools for reflection... the Standards of Evidence ladder

## Education

### CURRICULUM & QUALIFICATIONS

The DfE has published [two factsheets](#) on new GCSEs, one aimed at employers and further and higher education providers, the other aimed at parents.

- They include information on:
  - The new 9–1 grading scale
  - Standard and strong pass marks and what they mean
  - When the new grades will apply to different subjects

**Confusion is already being caused by the new system, with universities that have minimum entry grade requirements at GCSE – usually in English and Maths – choosing different ‘pass’ grade equivalents.**

- University College London and King’s College London says a C grade pass now requires a grade 5; Manchester, Leeds and Liverpool Universities has set the benchmark at grade 4.
- London School of Economics, which previously required grade Bs, now requires a 5, although a B grade could also be the equivalent of a 6.

**Ofqual has published [provisional statistics](#) for entries by age group and subject for summer GCSEs, AS and A levels in England; the accompanying data tables include figures for Northern Ireland and Wales.**

- Overall GCSE entries increased by over 3%, with the largest increases in EBacc subjects, particularly English Language (+52%) and English Literature (+48%); Computing increased by 9% to 69,350.
  - While Y11 entry in Science increased, overall entries fell due to Y10 students generally not taking it in the numbers seen in previous years.
- Entries for all non-EBacc subjects showed a decline, most notably in Humanities and Leisure & Tourism – subjects that are being discontinued as part of the reform process – and Statistics.
- Overall AS entries fell by 42% to 660,200, continuing the trend seen in 2016, when entries dropped by 14%.
- Overall A level entries remained broadly stable, but Science entries increased by 44% to 2,300, and Computing by 34% to 7,700.
  - Physics increased by 4.5% to 33,850.

*The British Computing Society, which played a major part in designing the new computing curriculum, has expressed concern about the relative ‘stagnation’ of GCSE entries to the new qualification. They have called on the government to develop a reformed ‘IT’ GCSE that will be less intimidating to those who don’t want to focus on coding and programming.*

**The National Union of Teachers (NUT) has published the [results](#) of a survey of 2,300 primary members, following the completion of Key Stage 1 and 2 national assessments (SATs).**

- 94% agreed with the findings of the House of Commons Education Committee that the ‘high-stakes system does not improve teaching and learning in primary schools’.
- 96% said that preparation for SATs does not support children’s access to a broad and balanced curriculum.
- 93% said that changes to SATs have significantly increased teacher workload at their school.

**The Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) has published [a policy note](#) on Technical & Professional Education written by former UCAS chief executive Mary Curnock Cook.**

- She suggests that, if the new approach is to provide a credible alternative to GCSEs/A levels, it will need to “confront the category mistakes of the past”; these include:
  - seeking parity of esteem between T-levels and A levels when comparison is meaningless; credibility will rely on them having currency for progression to employment or further learning.
  - ensuring clarity and good public understanding: the 15 proposed routes mix industry sectors and occupations, making it difficult to understand what exactly candidates will be qualified for; and the naming conflates purpose (‘technical’) and the scale of the challenge (Level).

*The name ‘T-level’ also suggests a qualification very much like an A level, when in fact the proposal is for a more programmatic approach that combines English, maths and a work placement with appropriate technical learning. More like a baccalaureate – but that name has now been appropriated by the DfE for performance measures.*

## SUBJECTS

**The British Council has published its 15<sup>th</sup> [Language Trends Survey](#), looking at language teaching in state primary and secondary schools in England.**

- Language teaching is becoming more firmly embedded in the primary curriculum, with 88% of respondents expressing ‘whole-hearted commitment’ to primary languages.
  - Nearly two thirds of primary schools now have more than five years’ experience teaching the subject although there are still huge discrepancies between schools in terms of language teaching provision.
- There remains a ‘wide gulf of understanding’ between primary and secondary schools about the levels achieved at the end of primary school.
- Some secondary schools with very low uptake in languages are successfully increasing numbers, stimulated by the EBacc measure; 38% of state schools are planning for numbers to increase year on year.
  - However, only 13% of those schools where numbers for languages have increased at GCSE say that this has also improved take up for languages post-16.
  - Significant changes to KS3 are under way in preparation for the new GCSE exams – for example, a move to concentrate on one language only.
- There is a widening north/south divide: in 2016, 65% of pupils in Inner London took a language GCSE compared to just 43% in the North East; London is the only part of the country where the percentage of pupils taking languages to GCSE is currently increasing.
- Pupils in schools in more deprived areas are less likely to sit a language GCSE or to be given the chance to study more than one foreign language.

## STEM

**A [blog](#) by the Institute of Education at UCL analyses data from the 2015 Trends in Maths & Science Study (TIMSS) to see how pupil attitudes to maths and science have changed over the last 20 years in England.**

- 82% of Y5 pupils (age 9-10) enjoy learning maths and 83% science; by Y9 (age 13-14), the figure for maths has fallen to 52%, although 75% still enjoy science.
  - These results compare reasonably well with other countries at Y5, although they are below the international mean at Y9.

- England's scores in enjoyment and confidence in maths have remained above the international average over the last 20 years, and have improved or remained the same at Y5; they have declined at Y9.
  - The proportion of Y5 pupils who said they didn't enjoy learning maths fell from 16% in 1995 to 12% in 2015; the proportion for Y9 rose from 20% to 31% over the same period (international average 36%).
  - The proportion of Y5 pupils who said they don't usually do well in maths remained at 11%, while the proportion for Y9 rose from 7% to 18% (international average 33%).
- More notably – and contrary to what we might expect – enjoyment and confidence in maths declined at the same time as attainment actually increased.
  - This pattern is the same across many TIMSS countries, where young people in low-achieving nations tend to enjoy maths more.

*The question is whether it's more important for people to be good at maths or for them to enjoy it.*

**The Science Council is leading a sector-wide initiative to support technical staff working in HE and research, with a view to increasing the visibility of important STEM roles.**

- The [Technician Commitment](#) aims to increase recognition and career development and the sustainability of technical skills, including through professional registration and evaluation of their impact.
- Many technicians are researchers and teachers in their own right, and play an important part in the development of the UK's future STEM workforce by developing students' technical skills.
- Signatories include the University of Cambridge, the Royal Air Force, BT Openreach, Microsoft, the Royal Opera House, the BBC and Guy's & St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust.

## EARLY YEARS

**The OECD has published [Starting Strong 2017](#) – a report on early childhood education and care (ECEC) that, for the first time, brings together all the key relevant indicators in one volume.**

- ECEC has experienced a surge of policy attention in OECD countries in recent decades and, in most, there is substantial public investment in the sector.
- PISA 2015 data show that children who attended ECEC for at least two years perform, on average, better at age 15.
  - Children who are already falling behind in the first few years of their childhood face greater obstacles to catch up and succeed at school and beyond.
- This relationship is strongest in systems that offer pre-primary education to a larger proportion of the student population over a longer period of time, have smaller child-to teacher ratios and invest more per child.
- Disadvantaged children can benefit the most from attending high-quality early childhood education – later interventions are less efficient because they take place after children's 'development window'.

## HEALTH & WELLBEING

**The Government has [announced](#) further details of the mental health training for teachers in England, originally announced in January.**

- £200,000 will be available in the first year to support training for around 1,000 staff, run by social enterprise Mental Health First Aid.
  - It will be extended in years two and three to cover every secondary school in England.
  - Participants will be invited to become a Youth Mental Health First Aid Champion to help share their knowledge and understanding across the school and wider community.
- The training will cover issues such as depression and anxiety, suicide and psychosis, self-harm, and eating disorders.

**The Education Policy Institute (EPI) has published a new [report](#) examining evidence of the impact of using social media on young people's mental health and emotional wellbeing.**

- There is evidence of a beneficial impact of social media on young people’s emotional wellbeing.
  - They can connect with others to improve their social skills online, develop their character and resilience, and collaborate on school projects.
  - Those with mental health problems are able to seek support on the internet, either through social media networks or through the online provision of advice and counselling support; 78% of young people contacting Childline now do so online.
- 34% of UK children have experienced at least one of several risks linked with social media use: cyber-bullying, concerns about excessive internet use, sharing of private information, and harmful content.
- Restricting a child’s use of the internet has been shown to reduce the chances of them experiencing online risks, but can be counterproductive as it also inhibits the development of the skills and resilience needed to handle such risks.
- 37% of UK 15 year-olds can be classed as ‘extreme internet users’ (6+ hours of use a day) – markedly higher than the average of OECD countries; 95% use social media before or after school – slightly above the OECD average.
  - Those classed as ‘extreme internet users’ are more likely to report being bullied (17.8%) than moderate internet users (6.7%).
  - Further evidence points to a link between periods spent on social media and a rise in mental health problems.
- Policy-makers have struggled to keep pace with technological change, and responses to protect and build resilience in young people are inadequate and often outdated.
- The Government needs to explore the development of resilience in young people, rather than focusing just on safeguarding.

## EDUCATION RESEARCH

**The National Literacy Trust (NLT) has published the [results](#) of its latest annual literacy survey of over 40,000 pupils aged 8–18.**

- 59% overall said that they enjoyed reading either very much or quite a lot; this was the highest percentage since the survey began, and 8ppt higher than in 2005.
  - Enjoyment rates fall as children get older, from 78% for 8–11s to 44% for 14–16s.
- The rate for girls was 65%, compared with 52% for boys, and the gap increases with age.
- There was no difference in reading enjoyment between pupils who receive free school meals and those who don’t.
- Pupils from Asian backgrounds were most likely to enjoy reading (65%), and pupils from White ethnic backgrounds the least likely (57%).

*There are also lots of statistics linking enjoyment of reading and reading performance, presented in a way that suggests that the first causes the second; however, it is surely more likely that performance causes enjoyment.*

**Nesta has published [the report](#) of a pilot project with Harris Academy, London, looking at the use of dictaphones and transcripts to improve pupils’ collaborative problem-solving (CPS) discussions.**

- CPS is more important than ever for future work, and helps children and young people succeed in the classroom now; however, it features little in UK school life.
- Key findings:
  - Teachers found transcriptions of pupil discussions a useful tool for improving practice, especially on pupils working together and solving problems collaboratively.
  - Teachers found it harder than expected to fit even a relatively modest 15 minutes of weekly collaborative problem-solving into their lessons.

- Teachers found the experiment a useful way to reflect upon some of the challenges and opportunities in designing, structuring and facilitating problem-solving activities to ensure meaningful collaboration takes place.

**A 'citizen science' study run as part of the BBC Terrific Scientific campaign for schools has found, contrary to expectations, that primary pupils may be more alert and react more quickly in the afternoon.**

- Schools generally schedule maths and literacy lessons in the morning because teachers think pupils will be better able to learn then.
- The study was carried out following the clock change in March and also found that sleep time increased and sleepiness reduced for 9–11 year-olds after the clocks were put forward.

**Research by the University of Glasgow suggests that playing video games could help young people develop the communication skills and mental adaptability needed to succeed at university.**

- In just 14 hours of game play over eight weeks, a group assigned commercial video games that included action role-playing, fantasy and adventure games showed improvements in communication, adaptability and resourcefulness, which are all seen as 'graduate attributes'.

**A blog post by the National Foundation for Education Research (NFER), looks at the different ways research evidence informs education policy in other European countries, drawing on a report published in February.**

- What emerges is that, in many education systems across Europe, policy development, implementation and evaluation is a rigorous, evidence-informed process.
  - Germany, for example, has a one-stop-shop for policymakers, researcher and scientists, offering data and comparative analysis on early childhood education, instructional quality, individual support for children at risk, and effects of educational reforms.
  - In Finland, stakeholders and public bodies are typically asked to provide evidence at the first stage of policy development.
  - In Poland there is a legal requirement to involve stakeholders in policy-making and all involved parties are required to base their reasoning on rational arguments derived from the available scientific sources, outcomes of analysis and empirical research.

## EDUCATION TECHNOLOGY

**Innovation charity Nesta has launched the second stage of its Rocket Fund pilot, with 30 state schools using the specialist crowd-funding platform to buy new technology products.**

- Within a week, six of them already had over 25% of the funding they were seeking.

**JISC has published the results of its student digital experience tracker survey, which looks at access to, use of and attitudes to various aspects of digital learning and tools.**

- Four versions of the tracker were created for different learner groups: Higher Education (8,190 responses), Further Education (12,347), Adult and Community Learning (1,337), and online learners (719).
- Among the detailed findings:
  - Over a third of ACL learners had never produced work in a digital form compared with 10% of FE learners and 5% of HE learners.
  - 82% of HE learners and 63% of FE learners felt that digital skills were important in their chosen career, but only half in each category felt that their course prepared them for a digital workplace.

## CAREERS SUPPORT

**The Careers & Enterprise Company has announced the successful bidders for funding from its £5m Careers & Enterprise Fund.**

- The funding will support 50 organisations running tried and tested programmes for young people that focus on work experience, enterprise education, volunteering and/or transition skills development.

- £1m of the investment will be targeted at the government's first six Opportunity Areas to help boost social mobility.
- The Company has also announced that it has signed up 1,700 secondary schools and colleges to its network so far – half of all secondary schools and colleges in England.
  - The Enterprise Adviser Network connects schools and colleges with employers and careers programme providers to work together to create meaningful encounters with the world of work for young people.
- The CEC's 2017 Annual Round-up can be found [here](#).

**Two of the programmes receiving funding from the Careers & Enterprise Fund are also being funded by the Education Endowment Foundation and Bank of America Merrill Lynch.**

- 780 pupils at 30 English schools will take part in the trial of [Community Apprenticeship](#), developed and run by Envision.
  - Through a mix of weekly coaching sessions, workshops and cross-city events, groups of around 10 teenagers will identify an issue they care about, come up with a way to help, and work with local businesses and charities to make it happen.
  - An inter-school competition will decide which team has made the biggest difference to their community and can demonstrate most effectively how they have developed skills valued by employers.
  - Evaluators from the Behavioural Insight Team (BIT) will measure the impact the programme has on character skills such as self-efficacy and persistence, as well as on maths and English GCSE results.
- A second trial, evaluated by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), will test the impact on GCSE Science and Maths results of participating in [a STEM-related work experience programme](#) run by CSW Group.
  - The programme will begin with a whole-year group work experience preparation day for Y10.
  - Students who might otherwise struggle to find a work experience placement will be supported through the application process, interviewed for opportunities, and given feedback after the placement.

**The Gatsby Foundation has held an event to celebrate the success to date of its [Good Career Guidance Benchmarks Pilot](#) being run across the North East.**

- To test the eight benchmarks identified in the Good Career Guidance report, Gatsby has funded the North East Local Enterprise Partnership to run a pilot across a minimum of 13 state-funded secondary schools and three colleges.
- The eight benchmarks are:
  - A stable careers programme
  - Learning from career and labour market information
  - Addressing the needs of each pupil
  - Linking curriculum learning to careers
  - Encounters with employers and employees
  - Experiences of workplaces
  - Encounters with further and higher education
  - Personal guidance
- The programme has been described as *“transformational in terms of improving students’ access to careers education and helping them develop the skills employers need”*.
- The pilot started in September 2015 and will end this July, with two additional years of school data collection until July 2019 to capture its impact.



## EMPLOYABILITY & EDUCATION BUSINESS PRACTICE

The Education & Employers charity has published [a paper](#) on the impact, demand and implementation of employer engagement in primary education, and the Primary Futures programme as a method of encouraging such activity.

- Although limited, research suggests that, if done correctly, employer engagement with children can help improve: attainment; the development of important non-cognitive skills; attitudes towards the world of work; the relationship between the classroom and the workplace.
- Primary Futures was designed to make it quick, easy and free for teaching staff in UK primary schools to connect with local employee volunteers.
  - By May 2017, 4,400 primary schools across the UK had registered to take part in the scheme and had issued 26,000 invitations to local employee volunteers.
- One conclusion that can now be made is that demand in British primary schools for employer engagement is meaningful.

## The Institutional Landscape

### FUNDING

**Speaking in parliament, Education Secretary Justine Greening has said that the Government remains committed to ensuring that no school loses money under the new national funding formula (NFF).**

- The DfE will continue with its plans for a per-pupil funding floor, as promised in the Conservative Party's manifesto.
  - Initial NFF proposals would have resulted in funding cuts for more than 9,000 schools.

*We don't need a GCSE in Maths to work out that fulfilling this promise will require extra funding. So far there has been no mention of where that will come from, especially as the Government won't be implementing the pre-election proposal to save money by cutting free school meal provision.*

**The OECD has launched an in-depth review of school funding to help countries design effective policies and connect resources to educational priorities.**

- The review's first [thematic report](#) covers 18 school systems and is one of the largest international studies of school funding policies ever conducted.
- Most of the participating countries have developed funding approaches designed to provide extra resources based on student needs; but evidence on the success of these schemes is often scarce.
- The report identifies potential pitfalls in the governance, distribution and evaluation of school funding and proposes funding approaches that can help countries support national goals for schooling, including those for equity.

### OFSTED

**In [a speech](#) to the Festival of Education, Chief Inspector Amanda Spielman described several shifts in emphasis in future Ofsted operations.**

- The research function will be expanded in order to provide further aggregation of insight, triangulation of findings with existing research, and evidence and analysis of what is working well.
  - It will also seek better to understand how it affects the sectors it inspects, by seeking the views of parents, teachers and governors, the Government and other users of its reports.
- Ofsted has a key role to play in balancing the accountability system – what it measures through inspection can counteract some of the pressure created by performance tables and floor standards.

*“Ofsted inspections must explore what is behind the data, asking how results have been achieved...looking underneath the bonnet to be sure that a good quality education – one that meets pupils’ needs – is not being compromised.”*

- A current research project is looking at curriculum practice in hundreds of schools across the country, and is being advised by a group of experts.
  - The findings will inform a new inspection framework being developed for 2019, including whether routine inspection needs rebalancing in favour of the curriculum.
- Finally, there will be greater focus on well-functioning school leadership teams rather than ‘visionary’ individual leaders.

*Ms Spielman suggested that schools should not be starting GCSE preparation in KS3, since this “...gives young people less time to study a range of subjects in depth and more time just practising the tests.” Her comment comes at a time when schools are reported to be changing their timetables to respond to the new tougher English and maths GCSEs [see item on UTCs, p11].*

## WORKFORCE

**The Education & Training Foundation (ETF) has launched [Advanced Teacher Status \(ATS\)](#) for teachers and trainers of post-14 learners.**

- ATS is designed for professionals teaching in all settings, including FE colleges, adult and community learning, work-based learning, employers, schools, offender learning settings and more.
- To be awarded ATS, a teacher or trainer must be a member of the Society for Education & Training (SET), have held Qualified Teaching Learning & Skills (QTLS) status for at least one year, and must have been qualified as a teacher for at least four years.
  - The ETF will be responsible for the accreditation and management of the status through SET.
- The ETF is working with the Chartered College of Teaching to ensure holders of ATS will be conferred Chartered Teacher Status, once it has been launched within the schools sector.
- The first cohort of up to 50 ATS candidates will be recruited during the summer to start in October 2017.

**The Education & Training Foundation (ETF) has published its annual [Workforce Data Report](#) for 2015/16, highlighting trends in staffing numbers, pay and demographics in England’s further education and skills sector.**

- Between 2011/12 and 2013/15 the number of full-time equivalent employees in FE colleges fell by 12,300.
  - Senior manager numbers have fallen faster than other parts of the sector, and now account for around 1.4% of the workforce.
- 86% of the FE workforce is white, and over half are over 45 years old; women account for 64% overall – 58% of teaching staff and 53% of senior managerial roles.
- The most commonly held teaching qualifications are: the Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) – 22% of teachers; Certificate of Education (14%); and Level 5 Diploma in Education & Training, (11%).
  - A third of teachers hold their main subject area qualifications at QCF Level 6 with another quarter holding main subject area qualifications at QCF Level 7 or higher.
- On average, teachers spend 15 hours on continuing professional development (CPD), although over 60% are reported as spending no time at all on CPD.

**The DfE has published the latest [teacher workforce statistics](#) for schools, covering: numbers, characteristics, qualifications, pay, vacancies, sickness absence and pupil-to-teacher ratios.**

- Overall teacher numbers are up slightly, from 456,900 full-time equivalents (FTEs) in 2015 to 457,300 in 2016; teaching assistant numbers are up from 263,000 to 265,600.
  - At primary, FTE teacher numbers have risen by 1.1%, while the number at secondary has fallen by 1.3%.
- The total FTE number of qualified entrants to teaching has decreased from 45,120 (10.4%) in 2015 to 43,830 (10.1%) in 2016.

- The total FTE number of qualified teachers leaving teaching has decreased from 43,370 (10.0%) in 2015 to 42,830 (9.9%).
- The one-year retention figure for newly qualified teachers is 87%, broadly unchanged over the last five years.
  - The three-year figure has dropped from 77% for the cohort that qualified in 2010 to 74% for those who qualified in 2013.

**The National College for Teaching & Leadership is asking teacher training providers to develop courses for generalist primary teachers to enable them to lead maths provision at their schools.**

- Primary maths specialist courses are currently offered only by designated providers for trainee teachers who want to focus on teaching maths.

## SCHOOLS

**Sue Baldwin, Director of School Efficiency at the DfE, has been named as the new Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) for the East of England and North East London; she will take over from Tim Coulson on 1 August.**

**The DfE has published [updated information](#) on academies open in England and those schools in the process of becoming academies.**

**Regional Schools Commissioners have told Academies Enterprise Trust (AET) – England’s largest academy chain – to re-broker two schools that were given ‘requires improvement’ ratings last year.**

- AET is also currently consulting on proposals to close down another school that has been judged as ‘requires improvement’.
- Five years ago, the DfE told the trust it could not sponsor any new schools after problems following quick expansion in the early years of the academy programme; the chain had to re-broker eight of its 74 academies.
- AET was taken off the ‘pause list’ earlier this year, and has again been considering expansion.

**The Sutton Trust has published [the fourth edition](#) of the annual ‘Chain Effects’ report, examining the impact of academy chains, and particularly the performance of secondary sponsored academies within chains.**

- Overall, a small number of chains continue to achieve impressive outcomes for their disadvantaged students against a range of measures, demonstrating the transformational impact on life chances that can be made.
  - However, a larger group of low-performing chains are achieving results that are not improving and may be harming the prospects of their disadvantaged students.
- The academies analysed – which have all been sponsored academies for at least three years – have lower inspection grades than the national figures for all mainstream schools.
  - 40% are not yet regarded as ‘good’ by Ofsted; 20% met the ‘coasting school’ definition in three successive years.
- Disadvantaged pupils in ten out of 48 chains had attainment above the national average, including four that were substantially above the average; 29 schools had attainment below the average.
  - The proportion of chains in which disadvantaged pupils perform above the mainstream average has fallen between 2013 and 2016.
- Improvement in attainment between 2014 and 2016 was better than average in half the chains and below average in ten.
  - Those chains that were most successful with disadvantaged pupils also tended to be successful with their more affluent pupils, while less successful chains tended to have poor results for both groups.
- KS4 pupils with high prior attainment made less progress in sponsored academies than they did in other types of school, as did disadvantaged pupils with high prior attainment.
  - In contrast, disadvantaged pupils with low prior attainment progressed better in the chains than their counterparts in other types of school.

- In most chains, attainment for disadvantaged and low-attaining pupils was similar in converter and sponsored academies, but disadvantaged pupils with low prior attainment made better progress in sponsored academies.
  - Those with high prior attainment made better progress in converters.

**The Baker Dearing Trust (BDT), which oversees university technical colleges (UTCs), reports that applications to some UTCs have markedly increased compared with last year.**

- Silverstone UTC currently has 201 applications for Y10 places in 2017/18 compared with 149 applications in total last year; Aston University Engineering Academy in Birmingham has 270 applications compared with 140 last year; UTC Sheffield has had 389 applications so far, compared with 218 last year.
- The rise is being partly ascribed to the new requirement that every local authority in England write to parents of 13-year-old children telling them about local 14–19 institutions.
  - The letters were sent out for the first time in February and March.

**The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) has published [an analysis](#) of UTCs that aims to put into context headline data around recruitment, attainment and closures.**

- Three out of the 37 UTCs that have been open for at least two years are above 75% capacity, while two thirds are below 50%.
  - Given the context of new schools trying to attract students to move at a non-traditional age, this should not be surprising.
- UTC students are less likely to come from the top 20% nationally in terms of KS2 outcomes, but have similar characteristics and prior attainment to their peers in the schools they previously attended.
  - At the start of KS3, absence rates among those who go on to UTCs are similar as for their peers, but they rise during the KS3 period; they remain high once they are in KS4 in the UTCs.
- Attainment 8 and Progress 8 scores are significantly lower for UTC students than for their peers in their feeder schools, but there are significant differences between the lowest and highest attaining.
  - It is impossible to know how much of pupil progress is attributable to their UTC, as they are not assessed at the point when they join.
- At least some of the poor performance of UTCs may be because the academic measures do not recognise the composition or breadth of curriculum offered by most UTCs.
  - At the same time, UTCs are only responsible for two of the five years that students spend in secondary education, but they are being held to account for all five years.

**[Schools Week](#) reports that five UTCs are consulting on taking pupils in from Y9 instead of Y10, due to the demands of reformed GCSEs, which are longer and harder than before.**

- Many traditional schools are now allocating three years to KS4 studies in English and maths.
- The UTCs are having to reduce their projected intake – Published Admissions Numbers (PAN) – in other years to allow for the new recruitment.

**A [survey](#) of over 2,000 adults in England and Wales by the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) reveals what the public thinks makes a good school, and attitudes towards selective education and grammar schools.**

- 80% say that it is very important that schools produce children who become “confident and self-assured adults” and turn out children who are capable of finding fulfilling employment.
  - Achieving good GCSEs is only rated as very important by 57% and accessing university by 22%.
- 61% oppose the idea of selection, agreeing with the statement: ‘All children should go to the same kind of secondary school, no matter how well or badly they do at primary school.’
  - Support for selective education is significantly associated with: being older; being male; voting Conservative; being more highly educated; and living in London, the South East, East and North West.
- However, 53% are in favour of expanding grammar schools, possibly because they believe they improve social mobility.

- 45% think there is some chance of a bright child from a disadvantaged background getting into a grammar school, and 18% think there is a high chance.
- 71% are in favour of grammar schools taking a minimum proportion of pupils from lower income homes as long as they pass the entrance exam, and a further 20% even if the children don't pass.
- Only 45% think that grammar schools do well at producing pupils who find fulfilling employment; 61% think they produce pupils who are confident and self-assured.
- Asked what type of schools they would prefer their child to attend, 42% chose grammars and 41% comprehensives.

**The DfE has published the latest edition of the annual statistical collection [Schools, pupils and their characteristics](#), taken from information collected in the January 2017 school census.**

- The number of pupils across all school types has risen by 110,000, to 8.67m.
  - The number in primary schools has risen by 74,500, a smaller increase than in previous years.
  - The number in secondary schools has risen by 29,700, compared to an 8,700 increase the previous year.
  - There are 4,400 more pupils in special schools.
- 14.0% of pupils are eligible for and claiming free schools meals: 14.1% in primary; 12.9% in secondary.
  - This is the lowest proportion since 2001, when the department began collecting pupil level information.
  - Primary academies have a higher than average rate of eligibility, at 15.8%; however sponsored academies have a rate of 22.9%, compared with converter academies at 9.3%.

## FURTHER EDUCATION (FE)

**A new collaboration led by the University of East London has been launched to improve educational and employment opportunities in their local area.**

- The [East London Skills & Employment Federation](#) will work with local schools, colleges, employers and authorities to help local people access the graduate-level employment opportunities being created in the area by economic regeneration and inward investment.
  - Six FE and sixth form colleges are currently involved: Barking & Dagenham College; Newham College of FE; New City College (comprising Hackney, Redbridge and Tower Hamlets colleges); Havering College of FE; Havering Sixth Form College; and Newham Sixth Form College.
- The Federation hopes to expand to include more colleges, as well as schools, employers and businesses in the focus boroughs.

**The legal merger of New College Nottingham and Central College Nottingham has finally been confirmed some 10 months after its due date, creating Nottingham College – one of the largest in the country.**

**Kensington & Chelsea College has announced plans to merge with Ealing, Hammersmith & West London College in 2018.**

- The Area Review recommended a merger with City Lit – a specialist designated institution that provides short courses for adults – but this has been rejected by both parties.

**The Collab Group of 36 colleges has announced two new exclusive partnerships.**

- Capita Further & Higher Education will provide further education and technology services.
- The Collab Group will be the exclusive supplier of apprenticeship provision for infrastructure and public support service provider Amey.

*In May, the Group announced that it would deliver apprenticeship training for property, residential, construction and services group Kier.*

**The DfE has published revised quarterly [FE and skills statistics](#) for England, providing data for 2015/16 as a whole and for the first two quarters of 2016/17.**

- Participation in adult further education by the second quarter of 2016/17 had fallen by 11.1% compared with the same period in 2015/16.
- 1,537,100 learners participated in adult education courses in the first half of this year – 78,300 fewer than in the same period in 2015/16 (-4.8%).
- 731,600 participated on an apprenticeship by the second quarter of 2016/17, compared to 708,900 at this time in 2015/16 (+3.2%).
  - 392,700 (53%) were at Intermediate Level; 308,200 (42%) at Advanced Level and 44,400 (6%) at Higher Level.
  - 156,800 (21%) were aged under 19.
- There were 258,800 apprenticeship starts, up from 251,100 in the first two quarters of 2015/16 (+3%).
  - 141,400 (54%) were Intermediate; 101,200 (39%) Advanced; 16,200 (6%) Higher.
  - 82,600 apprentices (32%) were aged under 19.
- There have been 110,200 apprenticeship framework achievements reported so far in 2016/17, compared to 101,300 reported at this time last year.

**The DfE has published provider-level [national achievement rates tables](#) for apprenticeships, education and training in 2015/16.**

- Headline data show the overall apprenticeship achievement rate – at all levels, for all ages and in all providers – to be 67%.

*The department has been criticised for publishing the tables without comparable figures for previous years; it said that a change in methodology meant the figures weren't comparable. However, it has now announced that the figures will be published after all, once it has worked out how to enable some level of comparability.*

## HIGHER EDUCATION (HE) APPLICATIONS, ADMISSIONS AND TUITION FEES

**A [new study](#) by researchers at the [Centre for Research on Learning and Life Chances \(LLAKES\)](#) at the Institute of Education suggests that students from poorer households may be deterred from applying to university due to fear of student loan debt.**

- Overall, young people are more willing to take on student loan debt in 2015 than in 2002, believing that a degree is a good investment.
  - There has also been a rise in the number of people attending university, including among those from low-income backgrounds.
- Debt aversion has increased among both working-class and middle-class students, but debt averse attitudes remain much stronger among working-class students than among upper-class students, and more so now than in 2002.

**[Research](#) by the UCL Institute of Education investigated why a larger proportion of 14 year-olds expected to apply to university than actually did so by age 21.**

- The most deprived fifth of 14–17 year-olds are twice as likely to give up on ambitions to attend university than the most advantaged fifth.
- At the same time, advantaged young people who don't plan to go to university but who then do well in GCSEs are more than 2.5 times more likely to change their mind and apply to university, compared with high-scoring poor pupils.
  - In contrast, those who receive low GCSE results are likely to switch from being 'likely' to 'unlikely' to apply for university, regardless of levels of disadvantage.

**The Office for Fair Access (OFFA) has published [a report](#) on the outcomes from its monitoring of Access Agreements for 2015/16.**

- Positive progress has been made on 82% of the targets set by higher education institutions (HEIs) and FECs through their Access Agreements.

- Fewer targets were met in student success (73%) than in access (75%) and progression to further study or employment (85%).
  - Targets that focused on mature entrants were the most frequently missed, with no progress reported against three out of 10 targets in this area.
- UCAS data for 2016 show that 29% more 18 year-olds from low participation neighbourhoods entered HE than in 2012/13.
  - However, they are still nearly 2.5 times less likely to enter HE than their most advantaged peers, and nearly six times less likely to enter a higher tariff institution.
- The number of disadvantaged students leaving before completing their studies has risen for the second year in a row, up from 8.2% to 8.8%.
  - The figure for the most advantaged students has fallen to below 5%.
  - Pastoral services, student mentors, peer-assisted study sessions and investing in study skills were all cited as factors for success by institutions that made progress in this area.
- In terms of progression, key factors cited by institutions included:
  - collaborative work with businesses and employers;
  - providing opportunities for work experience, internships and placements;
  - embedding activities into the curriculum to support the transition into work.

**The Russell Group has published [a briefing note](#) describing how, in order facilitate social mobility, its member universities have:**

- Nearly doubled funding over the last five years for scholarships, fee waivers, bursaries and outreach activities aimed at the most disadvantaged.
- Engaged in a wide range of activities designed to encourage successful applications from students from disadvantaged and under-represented backgrounds, including: mentoring, summer schools and campus visits, sponsoring schools, and providing CPD for teachers.
  - Worked closely with more than 2,000 schools across the UK every year.
- Provided academic, pastoral and financial support for disadvantaged students.
- Evaluated the success of their activities to design interventions that will be more effective, for example in supporting specific groups of students.

**The Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) and the Higher Education Academy (HEA) have published [the results](#) of their 2017 Student Academic Experience survey of over 14,000 full-time undergraduates.**

- The downward trend in perceptions of value has continued into 2017, with 35% feeling they have received good/very good value (-2ppt) and 34% feeling they have had poor/very poor value (+2ppt).
  - Ratings among students domiciled in Scotland show the largest decline in good value, from 67% to 56%.
  - The top drivers of value are: experience compared with expectations; the variety of timetabled sessions; and the quality of teachers and teaching methods, particularly the extent to which expectations are met.
- A third of students say that they would definitely or maybe have chosen another course if they could choose again – a number that has remained steady over time.
  - The figures vary widely by subject, from 17% for Medicine & Dentistry to 41% for Business & Administrative Studies and 45% for Technology.
- A new question finds that 65% of students feel that they have learnt a lot, with 7% feeling they have learnt not much or nothing.
  - Students who live in the family home are least likely to feel they have learnt a lot, as are those who spend a lot of their time in paid employment.
- Teaching quality appears to have improved on a number of measures, although scores in 2016 were often lower than in 2015.

- Specialist institutions perform relatively well, particularly in terms of help and support, whereas Russell Group institutions tend not to score as well, despite strong scores on overall value for money.
- As well as identifying lower levels of wellbeing among student respondents compared to the national population, the results highlight a clear decline year-on-year, with lower scores on all four measures of: life satisfaction; life worthwhile; happiness; and low anxiety.

**Universities UK has published the [results](#) of a survey of more than 1,000 students, looking at what they want from their university.**

- 47% say they regard themselves as a customer of their university, compared with 18% who feel the same about their secondary school.
- 79% value the relationship they have with their university and 87% say their university treats its students fairly.
- 62% say that their university cares about their best interests.
- The top three things they want from their relationship with their university are: personalised advice and support (80%); a service in return for their fees (73%); and a collaborative relationship with staff (69%).
- The top five things that make courses good value for money in students' perceptions are:
  - Good facilities available for studying
  - Future career prospects
  - High-quality lecturers and tutors
  - High-quality course content
  - Academically challenging

**Universities UK International has published [the results](#) of the world's largest survey of international students – the International Student Barometer (ISB).**

- The report examines the experience of 137,000 students in the UK, the USA, Canada, Australia, Germany and the Netherlands.
- The UK is ranked highest in terms of overall satisfaction, with 91% of students at all levels of study reporting that they are satisfied with their experience.
  - The UK is also ranked first by undergraduates for learning environment, arrival and orientation, living, and support services.
- International students studying in the UK at all levels are more likely to recommend their chosen destination than in any of our major competitors.

**UCAS has published [Progression Pathways 2017](#), examining the options for those wanting to gain a bachelor's degree in an incremental way and/or combine study with work.**

- The report focuses on four main pathways: foundation years; foundation degrees; Higher National Certificates (HNCs) and Diplomas (HNDs); and higher and degree-level apprenticeships.
- There is a boom in universities offering degrees with a foundation year or 'year zero', which enables students to gain study skills and subject knowledge, but incurs an additional year of tuition fees and expenses.
  - In England, the focus on apprenticeships appears to be driving a decline in standalone foundation degrees and HNC/Ds; and policy changes and labour market conditions have led to a collapse in part-time study.
- All the pathways have the potential to support widening participation, offering a second chance to learners, meeting the needs of those who need to live at home or study part-time, and often allowing students to progress at their own pace.
- There's confusion about terminology and a lack of robust evidence about outcomes for students pursuing different pathways, particularly compared to the information available on outcomes and destinations of 'traditional' undergraduates.



- Prospective students, apprentices and their advisers find it difficult to locate, compare and evaluate different pathways and learning options – even basic information on learning approaches, modes of study, time commitment, etc. is absent.
- Each pathway has progression challenges that may not be apparent to learners before they start their studies, including with the portability and recognition of their qualification.
  - The introduction of the apprenticeship levy and the likelihood that some employers will wrap support for foundation degrees and HNC/Ds into apprenticeships is a further complication.

**The DfE has published [experimental statistics](#) on employment and earnings of those who graduated in 2008/09, 2010/11 and 2012/13 from HE institutions in Great Britain.**

- Data are presented for 23 subject areas and split by sex, subject studied and institution.
  - Splits by institution are accompanied by information on graduates' average attainment prior to commencing studies and their 'Participation of Local Areas' (POLAR) classification, which is an indicator of disadvantage.

*This is the first year the new Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) dataset has been published. A [blog](#) by Universities UK gives some guidance on how to interpret it.*

**As part of its ongoing partnership with the Sutton Trust and the University of Warwick to improve the impact of outreach across HE, the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) has published new [guidance](#) for the evaluation of outreach by universities and colleges.**

## OTHER HE ISSUES

**The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) has published [the results](#) of the new Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) assessment.**

- The TEF was introduced by the Government to build evidence on teaching performance in the sector, complementing the long-standing Research Excellence Framework.
  - It includes measures in three areas: teaching quality; the learning environment; and the educational and professional outcomes achieved by students.
- Based on a combination of national data and evidence submitted by the institutions, each was rated gold, silver or bronze, or received a provisional award where there weren't enough data for a full assessment.
  - The TEF awards were decided by an independent panel of experts including academics, students and employer representatives.
- 295 universities, colleges and alternative HE providers voluntarily took part in the TEF: 59 were rated gold, 116 silver and 56 bronze.
  - The published material for each provider includes their submission, metrics data, contextual data and the statement of findings from the TEF panel.
  - The awards will also be published on Unistats and the UCAS website, alongside other information, to help inform prospective students' choices.

*Liverpool, Southampton, Durham and York universities have all said that they will appeal their rankings; THE analysis suggests that many other Russell Group institutions' TEF awards were better than the metrics warranted. Appeals will only be allowed on the basis of "significant procedural irregularity".*

**The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) has published the latest [statistics](#) on the destinations of leavers from HE (DLHE) in the UK.**

- 15% of those who left HE in 2015/16 went on to another course, up from 13% the year before; the percentage in UK work dropped slightly from 68% to 67%; the percentage unemployed remained at 5%, although it has fallen 2ppt since 2011/12.
  - With data released in March showing a 22% rise in full-time postgraduate enrolments in England in 2016/17, there is optimism in the sector that the introduction of postgraduate loans in England this year is having the desired effect.

- There were 17,355 recent HE leavers working in London last year who had originally come from outside the capital and studied somewhere else in the UK too.
  - No other region in the UK draws its working graduates from the rest of the country in such numbers, the closest being South East England with 6,710.
- HESA's new survey of university leavers, which is due to start collecting data from next year, will be called the Graduate Outcomes Survey.
  - It will look at the destination of leavers over a longer time frame than the DLHE's six months.

**Universities UK has published a [briefing on the Higher Education & Research Act 2017](#), which received royal assent in April, just before the general election was called.**

- The legislation – the first major regulatory reform to the UK HE sector in 25 years – is primarily concerned with the creation of two new bodies to regulate and fund providers: the Office for Students (OfS) and UK Research and Innovation (UKRI).
  - The OfS will replace the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) from April 2018.
  - UKRI combines the work of the UK-wide research councils as well as taking on administration of English quality-related funding.

**Sir Michael Barber's first speech as the incoming chair of the new OfS can be found [here](#).**

- He sets out five priorities:
  - Stewardship of the landscape - the regulatory framework
  - Engines of opportunity - access, success and progression
  - Inspiring teaching - The Teaching Excellence Framework
  - Twenty-first century economic growth - employability and the Industrial Strategy
  - Seamless transition - setting up the new regulator

*"We have a chance to open new vistas of opportunity for students, for cities and regions and for our country. Golden ages don't have to be in the past."*

**QS has published its 2018 [World University Ranking](#).**

- The top five remain Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Stanford, Harvard, California Institute of Technology and Cambridge, although the last two have switched places.
  - Oxford is 6<sup>th</sup>, University College London 7<sup>th</sup> and Imperial College 8<sup>th</sup>.
- 51 of the UK's 76 ranked universities have fallen down the table, and there are fewer UK universities in the top 100, 200 and 400 universities.
  - The most consistent decreases in score are found for citations per faculty, which measures research impact and intensiveness.
  - The data also show that, while the institutions are generally becoming more international in student intake, 56 UK universities have seen their international student ratios drop; US institutions have seen a similar fall this year.

**The THE has published its 2017 [World Reputation Rankings](#), based on an invitation-only opinion survey of senior, published academics.**

- The top five overall are: Harvard, MIT, Stanford, and Cambridge and Oxford (equal 4<sup>th</sup>).
- Leading universities in Asia have become more prominent, with Peking University entering the top 20 and Tsinghua University – also in China – entering the top 15; the University of Hong Kong is in the top 40 for the first time in five years, ahead of King's College London.
  - However, Asia's universities do not feature as highly on the THE World University Ranking, which largely measures research performance.

**Coventry University has become the first UK HEI to launch a range of fully online postgraduate degrees with MOOC (massive online open course) provider FutureLearn.**

- It will launch 50 degrees over the next five years, starting in early 2018 with programmes in business & law, health & life sciences, and engineering disciplines.
- Last year, FutureLearn became the first MOOC provider to offer a suite of postgraduate degrees entirely on its platform through a partnership with Australia's Deakin University.
- As with that partnership, online students at Coventry will be able to begin studying for free and can complete a range of short pathway courses before deciding whether to enrol in a 'pay as you go' degree.

**Glasgow Caledonian University is thought to be the first foreign HEI to be awarded a charter to become a degree-awarding body in New York.**

- Under the provisional licence, it will be able to teach a range of fashion-related master's courses, although the degrees will be awarded by the New York State Education Department (NYSED).
  - The charter will become permanent after a period of five years, subject to review by NYSED.

**On behalf of the British HE sector, Universities UK has signed a joint declaration with the French University Presidents' Conference.**

- It pledges to encourage increased levels of student and staff mobility, more joint degrees and more research and innovation partnerships among their members.

## BUSINESS SCHOOLS

**The FT has published its latest Global Masters in Finance ranking, based on two separate surveys completed by the business school and by alumni who graduated in 2014.**

- The top five schools for [pre-experience programmes](#) are: Edhec Business School (France); HEC Paris; Essec Business School (France/Singapore); ESCP Europe; MIT: Sloan.
- The top five for [post-experience degrees](#) are: London Business School; University of Cambridge: Judge; Singapore Management University; University of Illinois; Amsterdam Business School.

## The Workplace

### APPRENTICESHIPS & TRAINEESHIPS

**The Institute for Apprenticeships (IfA) has published two updated guidance documents:**

- A '[How to](#)' [guide](#) for trailblazer employer groups
- A [guide](#) to apprenticeships for potential apprentices

**The DfE has published [guidance](#) for employers and training providers on how they should meet the 20% off-the-job training requirement for apprentices.**

- Off-the-job training is defined as learning which is undertaken outside of the normal day-to-day working environment and leads towards the achievement of an apprenticeship.
  - This can include training that is delivered at the apprentice's normal place of work but must not be delivered as part of their normal working duties.
- The guidance includes best practice examples.

**The new Institute for Apprenticeships (IfA) is advertising for up to 150 unpaid industry experts to join employer-led groups that will help shape the future of the apprenticeships programme.**

*There are concerns about confusion and lack of "joined up decisions", as the panels will be separate from those being set up by the DfE to advise on the same occupational routes for new T-Levels.*

**The Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) has published [an updated list](#) of funding bands for approved apprenticeship standards.**

**The Association of Graduate Recruiters' [Apprenticeship Survey](#) suggests that 83% of student employers have apprenticeship programmes this year, and they are expecting to hire 59% more apprentices in 2017.**

- intermediate apprenticeships make up the largest share of programmes by volume (4,492) followed by Advanced (3,967) and Higher (3,320).
  - Intermediate apprenticeships are also expected to increase at the fastest rate this year (287%).
- The largest volumes of apprenticeships are in IT/telecoms and banking, while the highest growth rates are in IT/telecoms and retail.
- All of the employers taking part in the survey are paying the Apprenticeship Levy; on average, they expect to use 33% of Levy funds to recruit new apprentices this year.
  - Half of the respondents are starting programmes as a result of the Levy with some using the funds to up-skill existing staff instead.
- 74% of employers confirmed that their apprenticeships would not impact graduate hiring this year; an annual intake of apprentices is typically 1% of the workforce while an annual intake of graduates is typically 1.9%.

**A [report](#) by the Association of Graduate Recruiters, funded by HEFCE, investigates the degree apprenticeship strategies of employers of different sizes and sectors.**

- 44% of employers surveyed have accelerated their degree apprenticeship strategy as a result of the Apprenticeship Levy; just 22% said that they would be cutting graduate numbers as a result.
- Of the Levy-paying employers surveyed, 56% are offering or planning to offer one of the 18 approved degree apprenticeships available when the survey was undertaken in November 2016.
  - Large employers are more likely to do so, as are those in construction, financial services and law.
  - The Chartered Manager Degree Apprenticeship is predicted to grow by more than 400% between 2016 and 2019 to just over 1,000 apprenticeships; Digital & Technology Solutions Professional Degree Apprenticeships by over 280% to 635.
- 73% said that degree apprenticeships might be a part of solving the skills gap issue within their organisation; only 13% didn't see a clear link.
- 77% said their apprenticeship and social mobility strategies were linked, with only 5% stating outright that recruiting apprentices would *not* contribute to their social mobility agenda.
- The most frequently cited issues employers face in developing degree apprenticeships are around the lack of awareness (60%) and reputation (60%) as well as unknown student demand (42%).

**A freedom of information request by [FE Week](#) has revealed that the progression rate from traineeships to apprenticeships for all age groups improved from 22% in 2014/15 to 37% in 2015/16.**

- However, the progression rate for 19-24 year-olds was 17.6%, down from 20% the previous year.
- The traineeship scheme was launched four years ago to help low-skilled unemployed people below the age of 25 onto apprenticeships, replacing Access to Apprenticeships programmes.

**Monthly updated statistics for [apprenticeship applications](#) show applications rising while new vacancies posted have decreased.**

- So far this academic year, there has been an increase in the number of applications made in almost every month; in August 70% more applications were made than in August last year.
  - There has been a particular rise in the number of applications made by those under the age of 18.
- Statistics for the number of employers posting vacancies show that, so far this year, almost every month has seen fewer vacancies posted than in the same month last year, with April seeing a third fewer.
- The statistics are available for: age, gender, ethnicity, sector subject or programme level; live vacancies; age at registration; and number of applications by area and age.

**The Association of Employment & Learning Providers (AELP) has published [the results](#) of a telephone survey with 200 employers on the subject of apprentice recruitment.**

- 90% were aware of the Apprenticeship Levy, but 25% didn't know how much they will have to pay.
- 46% plan to recruit the same number of apprentices in the seven months following the levy introduction in April as in the seven months before; 35% plan to reduce numbers; 17% plan to increase them.
  - Post October 2017, 52% expect recruitment to stay the same as in the previous year, while 22% expect an increase and the same number a decrease.
- Opportunities for 16-18 year-olds and in Intermediate apprenticeships are likely to decrease after October 2017, although overall numbers are expected to rise.

**The Skills Commission's next research project will be on the subject of apprenticeships and social mobility, subject to finding sponsors for the report.**

- The inquiry will be part of the Commission's Spotlight project which is being supported by the Learning & Work Institute and LCBT (the London College of Beauty Therapy).
- The inquiry will be chaired by Peter Mayhew-Smith, principal of Kingston & Carlshalton Colleges, along with Michelle Donelan MP and Lillian Greenwood MP, both of whom are members of the Education Select Committee.
- The Commission examines skills policy, holds evidence-based inquiries and produces reports with recommendations for policymakers; it is co-chaired by Barry Sheerman MP and Dame Ruth Silver.

## SKILLS

**Deloitte has published the first report in a new series that will explore the critical challenges facing UK government and business.**

- The report is based on a survey of 2,000 non-British workers about their perceptions of the UK as a place to work and live, and wider research around the future of the UK workplace.
- The UK is the most favoured global destination, ahead of the US, Australia and Canada – almost 90% of those surveyed rank the UK as quite or highly attractive, with job opportunities and diversity seen as key strengths.
  - However, following Brexit, 48% of those based in the UK now find it less attractive, compared with 21% of those based outside.
- 36% of non-British workers based here are considering leaving in the next five years; the figure rises to 47% for high-skilled EU workers.
  - The figure varies by region and sector: 21% in the Northern Powerhouse are considering leaving, compared with 59% in London.
- Three of the sectors with the highest percentages of EU workers – accommodation & food services (21.1%), transport & storage (13.5%) and manufacturing (13.3%) – are among those that offer the greatest potential for automation.

**Google has opened a new 40,000 sq ft digital training academy in Victoria in London, designed to give lessons to anyone – from schoolchildren to chief executives – with input from Google staff and other industry experts.**

- The company has promised to offer digital skills training to everyone in the UK for free.
- The Academy is also working with the Prince's Trust to run a video training programme.

## RECRUITMENT & DEVELOPMENT

**The DfE has published the 2016 Employer Perspective Survey, based on interviews with over 18,000 employers across the UK, focusing on what drives employers' decisions around recruitment and people development.**

- 52% of UK establishments had a vacancy in the 12 months preceding the survey, up from 49% in 2014 and 48% in 2012.
  - The figures varied by nation: England 53%; Scotland and Wales 49%; Northern Ireland 44%.

- As in 2014, 66% of recruiting employers had taken on an individual under the age of 25 in the previous 12 months.
  - 51% only used one method of recruitment; 25% exclusively used word of mouth or personal recommendations.
- 31% had recruited education leavers in the 2–3 years preceding the survey – no change from 2014.
- Although leavers were generally considered to be well prepared for the workplace, the percentage had fallen markedly in Wales (by 15ppt to 44%) and Northern Ireland (by 8ppt to 60%).
  - Where education leavers were found to be poorly prepared, this was most commonly due to them having a poor attitude or a perceived lack of working world or life experience.
- 65% of employers reported that relevant work experience was a critical or significant factor in recruitment, but only 38% had offered any form of work experience placement in the last 12 months – 48% in Northern Ireland.
  - In addition to work placements, 10% of establishments also offered work inspiration activities to students, such as mentoring, holding site visits and visiting educational institutions to talk with students about careers.

*These figures are a lot lower than those cited by the CBI/Pearson [Education & Skills Survey](#) of 500 employers, which found that 81% had at least some links with schools and/or colleges.*

- 73% of establishments had offered some form of training for their staff in the previous 12 months, internal (62%) or external (47%); this was up from 69% (58%/45%) in 2014.
  - 26% had arranged or funded training leading to a recognised vocational qualification; 87% of them felt that it had led to better business performance, and 78% to improved staff retention.
- 18% offered apprenticeships at the time of the survey, up from 15% in 2014.
  - The national figures were: England 19% (+4ppt); Scotland 15% (+3ppt); Wales 15% (+2ppt); Northern Ireland 13% (+4ppt).
- 22% of those offering apprenticeships had increased the number since the point at which they started offering them.
  - 30% of those currently offering them expected the number offered to increase; 24% cited the apprenticeship levy as a reason for this expected increase.

*Data tables and slide packs are available for the UK as a whole and for each of the UK nations.*

*It is the first time the biennial study has been published since the Department took it over from the now-defunct UK Commission for Employment & Skills (UKCES).*

**CIPD and Hays have published their latest [Resourcing & Talent Planning Survey](#) of more than 1,000 HR professionals, looking – among other things – at recruitment and development practices.**

- 75% of respondents are reporting recruitment difficulties, and 72% expect competition for well-qualified talent to increase over the next three years as a result of the UK's decision to leave the EU.
  - 65% agree that the skills needed for jobs in their organisation are changing.
  - Leadership (58%), digital (54%) and commercial awareness skills (51%) are most likely to increase in demand over the next 12 months.
- 74% either are offering or plan to offer apprenticeships this year, up from 63% in 2015.
- Only 16% say their organisation currently measures the return on investment of their recruitment activity, and 56% say their organisation doesn't calculate the cost of people leaving the business.
- 89% say that their organisation has been making efforts to improve their employer brand in the last year.

**PwC has published its latest [Golden Age Index](#), which measures how effectively 34 OECD countries harness the economic power of older (55+) workers.**

- Iceland came first, New Zealand 2<sup>nd</sup> and Israel 3<sup>rd</sup>; the UK ranked 19<sup>th</sup>.

- If the UK's employment rates of those aged 55–64 matched those of 4<sup>th</sup> place Sweden, GDP could be boosted by around 4.2%, which equates to £80bn at current values.

## Government & Society

### SOCIETY, SOCIAL ENTERPRISE & INVESTMENT

**The Social Mobility Commission has published the first ever [‘Social Mobility Barometer’](#) – a poll of nearly 5,000 people across the UK.**

- 48% overall say that where you end up in society is largely determined by who your parents are, compared with 32% who say that everyone has a fair chance to get on regardless of their background.
  - 51% of 18-24 year olds agree with the first statement compared with 40% of those aged 65+.
  - Half of young people think the situation is getting worse with only 30% of 18-24 year olds believing it is becoming easier to move up in British society.
- 47% overall say they are better off financially than their parents and have a better standard of living; however the figure for 25-49 year olds is just 34%, compared to 73% of those aged 65+.
  - Only a fifth of 18–24 year-olds believe they have a better level of job security compared to their parents, and only 17% say they have better job satisfaction.
- 79% overall say there is a large gap between social classes in Britain today – just 12% believe the gap is small; 34% believe this gap is ‘very large’.
  - 49% consider themselves working class, 36% middle class and 1% upper class.
  - 78% of those who grew up in a working class family classify themselves as working class now.
- 44% say that it is becoming harder for people from less advantaged backgrounds to move up in society, compared with 18% who say it is getting easier.
  - 23% of those who say that their family was working class when they were growing up, say that their social background has held them back in their working life.
- 71% say there are ‘fairly or very’ large differences in opportunity depending on where you live in the country.
  - Those living in Scotland (75%), Wales (75%) and the North East (76%) are most likely to think that differences in opportunities exist.
  - 47% of those who moved from where they grew up say if they had stayed where they were, they would not have got the best opportunities in life.
  - 61% of people living in the North East say the opportunities for people to progress (compared to other parts of the country) are poor.

*Follow-up polls are due to be undertaken in each of the next four years.*

**The Social Mobility Commission, the Social Mobility Foundation and the City of London Corporation have published what is believed to be the world's first every [social mobility employer index](#).**

- Nearly 100 employers from 17 sectors, collectively employing just under 1m people, submitted entries about their practices and procedures in areas such as work with young people, recruitment, selection and progression.
  - 17% now set social mobility targets as part of their business strategy.
  - 40% ask new and current employees about the type of school attended; 26% about free school meal eligibility; 39% whether they were the first in their family to go to university; 7% about parental occupation; and 11% the postcode where they grew up.
  - The firms collectively scored highest on work with young people, but lowest on helping those from lower socio-economic backgrounds to progress in the workplace.
  - 96% of firms say they accept degrees from any university, but 61% of successful applicants attended one of the country's most selective 24 universities, despite making up just 42% of the applications.

- 11 Russell Group universities – all in the 20% of universities with the lowest percentage of state school students in the country – are visited by employers more than all the other UK universities combined.
- The top 10 firms are:
  - Grant Thornton UK LLP
  - KPMG UK LLP
  - Skanska UK PLC
  - Standard Life
  - Deloitte UK
  - JP Morgan
  - PwC
  - Berwin Leighton Paisner LLP
  - WM Morrisons Supermarkets Plc
  - Enterprise Rent-A-Car

**The Social Mobility Commission has published [an assessment](#) of government policies over the last 20 years to increase social mobility in the UK.**

- The analysis looks at where progress has been made across the various life stages, from the early years, through schools, into training or further/higher education for young people and then into the world of work.
- The report gives each arena of public policy a rating – red, amber or green – based on its assessment of how successful it has been across the two decades as a whole.
  - No life-stage gets a green rating; two are amber – Early Years and Schools; two are red – Young People and Working Lives.
  - Within each life-stage there are individual policy areas that have been successful, such as the focus on widening participation at university and on creating jobs; but overall, only seven score a green while 14 score amber and 16 red.

## GOVERNMENT ISSUES

**Following the general election, the ministerial line-ups are as follows:**

### Department for Education:

- Secretary of State for Education; Minister for Women & Equalities: **Justine Greening**
- Minister of State for School Standards: **Nick Gibb**
- Minister of State for Universities, Science, Research & Innovation: **Jo Johnson** (also reports to Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy – BEIS)
- Minister of State for Apprenticeships & Skills; Minister for Women: **Anne Milton**
  - Responsibilities include: technical education; careers education, information and guidance; adult education; reducing the number of young people who are NEET; leading on the review of tertiary funding.

*Anne Milton's first speech to the sector has been [described](#) as "collaborative and open", with an emphasis on making things work rather than introducing "new, bright ideas".*
- Minister of State for Children & Families: **Robert Goodwill**
  - Responsibilities include: children in care; early years policy; funding to raise attainment (Pupil Premium); free schools meals; special educational needs and disabilities (SEND); school sports and healthy pupils; cadets and military ethos in education; improving social mobility in the 12 Opportunity Areas.

### Other

- **Tracey Crouch** has been appointed Minister for Sport & Civil Society in the Department for Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS).



- The civil society role encompasses: youth policy and the National Citizen Service; social action, social enterprise and social investment; the Big Society agenda.
- **David Gauke** has been appointed Secretary of State for Work & Pensions.
  - **Damian Hinds** remains Minister of State for Employment.

**Analysis** by the Sutton Trust has found that 29% of MPs in the new House of Commons were privately educated, compared to 32% of those elected in 2015.

- MPs educated at comprehensive schools now make up 51% of the House, up from 49% in 2015.
  - Comprehensive schools were attended by 67% of Labour MPs, 38% of Conservative MPs and 88% of the SNP MPs.
  - 18% of MPs went to selective state grammar schools – a similar level to the previous parliament.
- 45% of Conservative MPs were privately educated, compared to 14% of Labour MPs and 6% of SNP MPs.
  - The proportion of privately educated Conservative MPs has fallen from 47% in the last parliament, 54% in 2010 and 73% in 1979.
  - With only 7% of the general population attending independent schools, MPs are still four times more likely to have gone to a fee-paying school than their constituents.
  - Out of those MPs who were privately educated, 20 (10%) went to Eton (3% of all MPs), the highest number of MPs educated at a single school.
- 32% of male MPs are privately educated, compared to 24% of female MPs, despite men and women in the UK attending private schools in roughly equal numbers.
- 89% of MPs are graduates; 23% hold an Oxbridge degree, down from 26% in 2015 while a further 29% went to another Russell Group university.

**Schools Week** has identified at least six former teachers and teaching assistants who have been newly elected to parliament, many of them having campaigned specifically on education issues.

The Queen’s Speech announced 27 new bills, eight of which relate to Brexit and its implications for key industries; the full text and background briefing can be found [here](#).

- On education, there was no legislation to remove the current ban on expanding selection, and the controversial plan to abolish universal free lunches for infants was also absent.
- The actual speech said:
 

*“My government will continue to work to ensure that every child has the opportunity to attend a good school and that all schools are fairly funded. My ministers will work to ensure people have the skills they need for the high-skilled, high-wage jobs of the future, including through a major reform of technical education.”*
- However, the background briefing suggests further selection might not have been abandoned completely:
 

*“We want every child to go to a good or outstanding school. We will look at all options and work with Parliament to bring forward proposals that can command a majority.”*
- On further and higher education, a review of tertiary funding promised in the Conservative manifesto was also absent from the Queen’s speech, suggesting that any such review might be on a smaller scale than initially envisaged.
  - As noted above, Anne Milton has the review as part of her responsibilities.

*Commentators have suggested that the Government has had to radically change its agenda for education, but will still be seeking to make a difference where it can.*

The House of Commons Library has published a [comprehensive summary](#) of the key policy issues and questions facing the new Parliament as it started its new session.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

*As we go to press, the political situation in Northern Ireland remains unresolved. However, the departments continue to function in terms of implementation and monitoring.*

The Department of Education has published updated [teacher workforce statistics](#) for 2016/17.

The Department for the Economy has published a series of [HE statistical fact sheets](#).

- They include: NI-domiciled HE enrolments at NI FE Colleges and Republic of Ireland institutions; Initial Teacher Training figures; enrolments on STEM courses; and the Higher Education Age Participation Index.

## SCOTLAND

The Scottish Government has published [the next steps](#) in its plans to reform education governance in order to create a “school- and teacher-led system”.

- Decisions about improving learning and teaching and the funding to support these new statutory duties will rest at school level.
- **Teachers** will be the leaders of learning in their classrooms and will be supported through a new offer of support and improvement.
  - They will help develop new career pathways allowing greater opportunities for career development and progression into leadership, specialist or improvement roles; and will be supported by a coherent, streamlined professional learning offer.
- **Head teachers** will lead learning in their schools, supported by a new offer of support and improvement.
  - They will select and manage staff; decide on staffing structures; decide on curriculum content and offer; and be responsible for raising attainment and closing the attainment gap.
  - They will collaborate for school improvement at school, cluster and regional level, leading self-evaluation and improvement of school performance, and monitoring school progress and reporting.
  - They will manage greater proportions of school funding, subject to a [consultation](#) on funding, currently underway.
- New ‘**regional improvement collaboratives**’ will provide education improvement services and support through teams drawing on Education Scotland staff, local authority staff and others.
  - The collaboratives will develop an annual regional plan across all partners, and will facilitate collaborative working, practice sharing and networks.
  - They will be led by a Regional Director who will report to the Chief Inspector and Chief Executive of Education Scotland.
- **Local authorities** will have a new duty to collaborate to support improvement on a regional basis; and they will be responsible for improvement through their provision of education support services, regional collaboration and school leadership appointments.
- **Education Scotland** will have an enhanced role, with a strengthened inspection and improvement function and a renewed focus on professional learning and leadership.

The Scottish Government has published updated [statistics](#) for attainment and leaver destinations.

- 91.4% of 2015/16 school leavers were in a positive destination in March 2017, down from 92.0% of 2014/15 school leavers in March 2016.
- The figure for those from the most deprived backgrounds was 85% (-1.3ppt), compared with 96.2% from the least deprived backgrounds (-0.1ppt).

Skills Development Scotland has published [Modern Apprenticeship statistics](#) for the fourth quarter of 2016/17.

- The number of starts increased to 26,262 and exceeded the 2016/17 annual target.
  - 76% of new starts were aged 16–24.
  - The largest proportion (23%) were in the construction industry.

**Minister for employability and training Jamie Hepburn has announced plans to expand graduate-level apprenticeships following a pilot scheme last year.**

- 379 places will be made available.

**Audit Scotland's [annual review](#) of the country's college sector has found that its college student population has fallen to its lowest number since 2006/07.**

- Part-time student numbers fell by 8% from 2014/15, to 151,498 in 2015/16; full-time student numbers were down 1% to 77,332.
  - Most of the reductions were in the 16–24 age group, but it is not known whether they are due to a fall in demand.
- Despite the fall in students, the sector exceeded the target set by government, with 1,752,536 credits achieved against a target of 1,689,431; but performance has declined since 2013/14.
  - The decline in the number of 16–19 year-olds is expected to make it harder for the sector to continue to meet the target in future years, as will the increasing tendency for young people to enter employment or university.
- The percentage of full-time students successfully completing their course increased in 2015/16, and at least 83% of students who achieved a qualification went on to a positive destination, such as further study or employment.
- The financial health of colleges remains "relatively stable" but it has deteriorated since 2014/15.

*The Government has said that some of the figures used are not directly comparable with data gathered a decade ago, and that overall student headcount has increased slightly.*

**Further Education Minister Shirley-Anne Somerville has launched the first national improvement programme to raise attainment and improve retention in Scotland's colleges.**

- The programme will explore what is already working well and what more the FE sector can do to ensure college students stay on.
- The five colleges taking part in phase one are: Dundee & Angus College; Edinburgh College; Inverness College – UHI; New College Lanarkshire; West College Scotland.
- Improvement work will be led by college-based improvement teams, guided and supported by a Scottish Government Improvement Advisor.

**A [consultation](#) is underway on financial support for college and university students in Scotland as part of an independent review of how students are supported during their studies.**

- Although no preferred government approach is advocated, the review's findings so far support:
  - greater alignment of financial support for students across colleges and universities, with increased fairness in what all students can access;
  - a simplification and clarification of all of the systems used to provide financial support;
  - better and clearer communication of the funding available and further consideration of the levels of funding required for all students and the funding mix.
- The consultation closed on 31 August.

**The Scottish Government has provided more than £1m to establish Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) Regional Groups in Orkney, Shetland and the Outer Hebrides.**

- It has also announced that funding for the DYW regional groups nationwide will be extended until 2021.
- The latest groups complete the network of 21 set up across Scotland as part of the [Youth Employment Strategy: Developing the Young Workforce](#).
- The groups aim to encourage and support employers to engage directly with schools and colleges; and challenge and support employers to recruit more young people into their workforce.

- More than 3,500 employers and 100 schools have already engaged with the programme since it was launched in 2015.

**Research** by Skills Development Scotland and the Digital Technologies Skills Group finds that digital technology is the fastest growing sector of the Scottish economy, accounting for 5% of the business base and employing 2% of the workforce.

- The number of tech businesses rose by 53% between 2010 and 2015, compared with 19% for businesses overall.
  - Micro businesses (1-10 employees) account for 95% of firms in the sector.
- Over 60,000 people are employed in tech businesses across Scotland with 60% working in tech roles and 40% working in other types of jobs.
  - The top three employment areas are Glasgow City (29%), Edinburgh (23%) and West Lothian (9%).
- Over 90,000 people are employed in tech roles in all sectors in Scotland - a 10% increase on 2015-2016.
  - Two fifths are employed in tech businesses with the remainder employed in other sectors such as finance, creative industries, engineering and healthcare.
- The sector is forecast to grow twice as fast as the Scottish economy overall in the years to 2024.

Interested in a more detailed summary of developments in Scotland? Contact [angela.gardner@ajenterprises.co.uk](mailto:angela.gardner@ajenterprises.co.uk) for your free trial copy of:

**Informed Scotland**

## WALES

**Education Secretary Kirsty Williams has announced that schools are to be given £1.3m over five years to set up clubs to teach computer coding, as part of the Welsh Government's investment in raising school standards.**

- The new national curriculum that is expected to be phased in by 2021 recommends that computer programming and IT be given the same importance as literacy and numeracy.
- Three years ago experts warned that schools in Wales were in danger of being left behind in terms of digital education.

**Kirsty Williams has published proposals to create a new commission to oversee the higher and further education sector in Wales, succeeding the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW).**

- The functions of the new commission include:
  - Protecting the interests of learners, ensuring that vocational and academic routes are equally valued and making sure Wales has the skills needed to succeed in an increasingly competitive economy.
  - Strategic planning of educational and skills delivery across all post-compulsory education and training in Wales, including school sixth forms.
  - Overseeing and coordinating all Welsh Government research and innovation funding with the aim of creating a more dynamic and responsive-to-need research, innovation and knowledge environment in Wales.
  - Funding, contracting, quality assuring, financial monitoring and auditing higher education, further education, work based learning, adult community learning, and relevant employability and employer-led programmes.
  - Developing better links between higher and further education and Welsh business.
- The commission would report annually to Welsh Ministers on the performance of the post-compulsory sector.
- The consultation also seeks views on how HE governance arrangements in Wales might need to be modernised in light of significant changes to the landscape in Wales and across the UK, including the introduction of the Higher Education & Research Act 2017 in England.

## PEOPLE

**Kirsti Lord, acting principal at City College Coventry, has been appointed as the new deputy chief executive of the Association of Colleges.** She will have a specific focus on member services, alongside current deputy chief executive Julian Gravatt.