

'What do I get?'

Ten essays on student fees,
student engagement
and student choice



Edited by Nick Hillman

hepi

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Introduction

Nick Hillman, Director of HEPI

At the end of my freshers' week in 1990, I saw The Buzzcocks play the Students' Union. The title of this collection, *What Do I Get?*, is lifted from one of their singles because that concert was early proof for me that student life is not just about academic work. It encompasses a rich menu of new opportunities that can mark the transition to adulthood.

But it is about academic life too and, when I matriculated, the amount of spending on each student had been falling for 15 years. Academics and students struggled with overcrowded lectures and seminars, and there was too little personal contact. The introduction of maintenance loans did little to improve the academic experience.

Since then, more money has become available. In England, undergraduate tuition fees have been introduced, tripled and tripled again. This has raised challenges of a new kind: the annual HEPI *Academic Experience Survey*, undertaken in conjunction with the Higher Education Academy (HEA), shows students' expectations have evolved, with growing concerns about value for money.

In 2010, the Independent Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance, known as the Browne Review, recommended fees above £6,000 should include a levy to encourage efficiency and to pay for loan defaults. But some

institutions argued a levy would be an unjustified 'tax' and the Minister for Universities and Science, David Willetts, wanted to protect the amount of money spent on each student even in austere times. So the tuition fee cap was set at £9,000 a year for 2012/13, where it has stayed.

Now per-student spending, known as the unit-of-resource, is under threat once more. The 2015 general election is an unknown factor but any government that takes office afterwards is likely to establish a spending review that poses a challenge to higher education. The budget at the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills is unlikely to be protected from the next wave of cuts and the removal of student number controls will lead to more students. Institutions may have to do more with less.

There are voices in favour of higher fees and others in favour of lower fees. A higher fee cap could only happen if parliamentarians were willing to spend political capital by voting for it, which is far from certain. A lower fee cap would mean a reduction in the unit-of-resource unless the Treasury is willing to find additional money for higher education.

In May 2014, during his time as Vice-Chancellor of the University of East Anglia (UEA), Edward Acton warned:

the [higher education] sector still has not articulated the necessary minimum in either staff or student input essential for degree-level study. That leaves it all too easy for government/society to imagine there is scope for cutting the unit of resource without damaging student education.

“Everyone knows that going to university in England typically costs £9,000, but there is much less understanding of what you get in return and how it varies”

This book, which starts with a chapter by Professor Acton on engaging students, is a response to that challenge. Everyone knows that going to university in England typically costs £9,000, but there is much less understanding of what you get in return and how it varies across the sector.

The cudgels are taken up in the second chapter by Nigel Carrington, Vice-Chancellor of the University of the Arts London. He explains the financial challenges in delivering a high-quality and practical arts education at a time of fixed budgets and political uncertainty, and while the UK is sending out mixed messages on the welcome offered to international students.

Dr Tony Strike and Dr Paul White of the University of Sheffield then show how the £9,000 fee regime led to a new covenant between students and staff at an institution that already had a long history of listening to its learners. It was evolution not revolution, but was so successful that the University came top in the 2014/15 *Times Higher Education* Student Experience Survey.

Richard Brabner of the University of Hertfordshire reveals how his institution has put a renewed focus on embedding employability in all courses so that their graduates find it as easy as possible to join the workforce.

Martyn Riddleston of the University of Leicester explains how he and his colleagues have responded to questions from a Students' Union President on where tuition fees are spent by presenting financial information in new ways.

Matthew Batstone of the New College of the Humanities (NCH) demystifies this controversial institution. He explains the relatively high costs of delivering NCH's Oxbridge-inspired mission. He also usefully highlights the gap between the Coalition's rhetoric on opening up the higher education sector and the practical obstacles faced by those who try to do so – a theme to which HEPI may return.

Carl Lygo, Vice-Chancellor of BPP University, takes a different tack. He questions 'why undergraduate fees need to be so high' and argues for more competition, with a focus on price as well as quality.

Ian Dunn takes up that challenge on behalf of Coventry University College. So does Alex Day, Director of Adult Education at Peter Symonds College in Winchester, who offers an important warning: 'Adapting to the higher education environment is not instant and it has not all been plain sailing.'

The last chapter, by Professor Craig Mahoney and Ian McCue, from the University of the West of Scotland, explains the challenges faced by UK universities outside the English fees regime. The student funding rules are different, but institutions still have to spread available resources across a range of

“We cannot have evidence-based policy without the evidence”

externally-imposed priorities while delivering excellent teaching and learning. Funding of undergraduate study in Wales and Northern Ireland will be covered in a separate forthcoming HEPI publication.

Taken together, the chapters are designed to encourage debate rather than end it. On their own, they may not persuade policymakers to change their mind on fees, funding or legislation after the 2015 election. But we cannot have evidence-based policy without the evidence and the authors usefully reveal how a diverse set of institutions are faring in the new world.

1. Underpinning the value of a UK degree

Edward Acton, Former Vice-Chancellor,
University of East Anglia

Before the Browne Review of Student Finance was launched in 2009, the University of East Anglia had begun a strategic drive to intensify undergraduate study. The centrepiece was heavy investment in additional high-quality academic appointments. Since fees were raised to £9,000 in 2012, that has remained a top priority. As a result, the staff:student ratio has fallen from 1:19 in 2008/09 to 1:13, moving from the 62nd to the 13th in the country, and there has been a dramatic increase in academic time devoted to education.

We focused resources on two supporting areas. To enhance career preparation and work experience, we quadrupled our Career Centre budget. And we have invested in new teaching infrastructure and associated IT. When setting out on this path, it ran against prevailing wisdom. I remember the reaction of the first Vice-Chancellor I told, a few years ago, that UEA was making it a priority to motivate and support our undergraduates to work much harder. He guffawed. Here was a bizarre and perhaps wilfully stupid mission.

The watchword of the hour was 'the student experience', but all too often it relegated the academic core to the periphery and rendered the student a passive consumer. The

“*Too many students were passive, silent or absent*”

companion rallying cry of ‘student engagement’ delivered the worthy cause of a student voice in governance and programme development, but not did not guarantee universal academic effort. And, although the UK’s Quality Assurance Agency was the envy of the world, its institutional audits took no notice whatsoever of how much or how little time students spent studying.

In a number of universities a counter-current was underway, with its own guru in Professor Graham Gibbs. In UEA’s case, this found expression when a group of senior academics – drawn from Maths, Biological Sciences, Environmental Sciences, Medicine, Social Work, Education, History and English Literature – were charged to gaze into the future.

Their core resolution was that UEA should reverse the dilution of undergraduate education common to almost all the Russell and 1994 Group institutions we looked at. Excitement and even discussion among academics about teaching strategies had declined. The number of formative assignments had reduced. Contact time had shrunk and individual mentoring of students had tapered. Small-group seminars meanwhile, of which UEA had been a standard bearer, had swollen. Too many students were passive, silent or absent. Spot-checks confirmed a steep fall in the work required of students and their study time.

This was not universal. I remember a Cambridge colleague calculating in about 2005 that, over three years, the typical History undergraduate submitted about 150,000 words, including all coursework and exams. Checking with half a dozen 1994/Russell Group History departments, I found the norm was well below half that figure.

HEPI's study-time surveys of 2006 and 2007 provided cast-iron proof. Outside Oxbridge, there had been a grave reduction in the time undergraduates spent on their studies in term-time. There was now a yawning gap between Oxbridge and the rest. While minimal in Medicine and health-related degrees, the problem was acute in humanities and social sciences. Comparisons with western Europe, backed by Erasmus student surveys, pointed to a specifically British problem.

Mercifully this situation, so corrosive of the work ethic of British society as a whole, is being raised by parents, employers, teachers, political opinion across the spectrum and, critically, by academics themselves. The evidence is overwhelming that student benefit – in terms of understanding, competence, time-management, preparation for starting work, subsequent career momentum, and above all intellectual and personal development – depends on the number of hours they devote to study. That correlation is inherent in the very purpose of higher education: to bring undergraduates abreast of the most advanced understanding in their field, itself constantly on the move; to instil appreciation of the provisional and developing nature of knowledge; and to

“The more each student applies himself or herself, the greater the reward”

maximise their ability to apply research methods for the rest of their lives. At this level, the more each student applies himself or herself, the greater the reward.

Recent HEPI survey evidence confirms this. The proportion of undergraduates in England who consider they receive poor value for money has increased to one-third, and the reason they cite most often for their disappointment is: ‘I haven’t put in enough effort myself’. It is clear, too, that each university’s ethos, the academic support and intellectual stimulation it provides, and its prevailing work ethic play a role in determining the level of a student’s application. A student who would readily work the 40 hours a week normal at Oxbridge all too soon adapts to the much lower figure common elsewhere.

Among several causes, central has been the deterioration in staff:student ratios. Additional staff time is the *sine qua non* for smaller-group teaching, swift adoption of the best IT teaching innovations and additional formative work with brisk and high-quality feedback. Since world-class research, with or without the Research Excellence Framework, needs more rather than less time as international competition intensifies, switching the research time of those delivering 3* and 4* work towards teaching is self-defeating. The logic is

inescapable – develop and celebrate a parallel career track that focuses on teaching: syllabus-development; synthesis; technical innovation; and HE pedagogy. It has been gratifying to see UEA’s research citation ranking rise steeply since we adopted this twin-track career approach, and to see Cambridge join the research-intensives doing likewise.

The shift in the expenditure pattern at UEA and the concentration on academic capacity and intensifying undergraduate education preceded the general election of 2010 and the advent of higher fees. But how far do the changes introduced herald a system-wide shift in the same direction?

Certainly David Willetts’s aspiration to reverse the downward trend in this aspect of UK higher education coincided with and helped create a more benign intellectual context for UEA.

It is also encouraging that many universities have improved their staff:student ratio over the last 5 years – UEA is an outlier in the scale and speed of improvement, but not in the direction of travel.

Likewise, with study-time. Successive HEPI surveys show incremental improvements since 2006/07. UEA students have responded positively to additional academic support and intellectual stimulation. Progress has already been made towards the ultimate ambition that among research-intensives UEA should cede only to Oxbridge in terms of undergraduate effort – and should outperform even them in terms of student enthusiasm. Taken together, the latest HEPI

survey and National Student Survey see us achieve that double goal in our School of Biological Sciences. But here, too, HEPI's latest figures suggest the sector as a whole is beginning to raise its game.

However, the headroom created by higher fees is too limited to finance sustained extra investment, especially in the laboratory sciences. Given the collapse in block grant and capital funding from HEFCE, the new fee regime is better credited with shielding higher education from cuts than providing a windfall opportunity to improve staff:student ratios. Even that shield has been weakened by additional marketing costs arising from intensified competition for well-qualified home and EU students and the need to compensate for the international damage inflicted by the Home Office. Moreover, without some reversal of HEFCE cuts, the £9,000 cap implies an extended period of real-term funding decline. To afford the additional academic investment at UEA has required, beyond vigorous cost-cutting, a radical reordering of priorities.

Nor is it easy to share the Coalition's confidence that greater student choice and financial leverage guarantees a sustained intensification in undergraduate study. It is not as if student choice was absent during the long decline in study-time, and ambitious universities always wanted the best qualified. Yet, Oxbridge apart, the most popular and well-established universities allowed study-time to shrink. Since the 1960s, according to David Willetts, the pre-1992 institutions have

allowed academic time devoted to teaching to tumble from 55 per cent to 40 per cent.

Financial incentives are powerful instruments. But relying on artificial market signals to deliver a social good as precious as higher education is fraught with risk. The most disarming admission in Willetts's *Robbins Revisited* (2013) is his surprise that Robbins, that 'distinguished free market economist' whom he sees as a kindred spirit, 'did not suggest any economic incentives to ensure that universities focused on teaching.'

The surest way to entrench and deepen the incipient shift in higher education priorities is for UK universities to spell out and commit to the necessary staff:student ratio and student input norms necessary for the gilt-edged degrees the UK is supremely well placed to deliver. This is what is done so effectively in Medicine and the Health Sciences.

We must take ownership and make real a weekly study-time norm of 40 hours across the board; we must pre-empt the current ominous threat to the unit-of-resource by securing political consensus that, whatever the mechanism, funding will be sufficient to pay for the staff:student ratios necessary to deliver that study-time norm; and we must insist that a new key performance indicator, building on HEPI's surveys of the weekly study-time reported by students at each university, is published annually and features prominently in national league tables.

2. One size does not fit all

Nigel Carrington, Vice-Chancellor,
University of the Arts London

A structural deficit has emerged in higher education across creative subjects because recent changes to higher education funding do not take account of the full expense of teaching. This is an unsustainable economic model, increases risk and changes the business strategy for universities who teach these subjects. It stems from a lack of policy understanding of the value of the UK creative industries and the extent to which they rely on these courses for their talent supply chain. It also increases risk and changes the business strategy for universities that teach these subjects.

Commissioned by Falmouth University in 2014, the Centre for Economics and Business Research investigated the current and future macroeconomic contribution of the creative industries to the UK economy. It found the creative industries contributed £70 billion – around 4.8 per cent – of the total UK Gross Value Added in 2012, with an expected compound annual growth rate of 7 per cent. Total direct employment stands at 1.2 million people.

A major longitudinal survey in 2010, conducted by the Institute of Employment Studies, established the importance of creative education to the talent supply chain of the creative industries. Commissioned by a coalition of universities led by the

University of the Arts London (UAL), *Creative Graduates Creative Futures* tracked 3,500 graduates from 26 UK higher education institutions in practice-based art, design, crafts and media subjects. A headline finding is that 'Creative industries are unlike virtually any other sector, being heavily reliant on highly qualified graduate and post-graduate workers'. Three out of four graduates had worked in the creative industries and in their field of expertise since graduating.

Creative subjects not only build the creative industries but also contribute to the STEM strategy. For example, the fashion industry needs to become more sustainable so UAL's Centre for Sustainable Fashion is working with fashion giant Kering, owner of Gucci, Christopher Kane, Stella McCartney and Alexander McQueen (to name just a few of its brands), in order to address this. Surgeons need to be able to draw and use 3D models and Glasgow School of Art teaches an MSc in Medical Visualisation and Human Anatomy.

Creative subjects are vocational and expensive to teach because, like science, they require students to acquire practical skills as well as knowledge. Practice-based research is at the heart of many branches of science and creative education, perhaps arising from their shared heritage in provincial design schools in manufacturing districts in the 1840s. Like science, creative subjects require highly-trained technicians, specialist equipment, materials and above all space. And, of course, we must provide the basics of education in any subject: academics, lecture theatres, libraries and computers.

“No one seriously doubts that costs of provision in the art and design sector challenge the fees cap”

This does not come cheap. Taught courses throughout the creative sector are predominantly studio-based. Activity is concentrated in high-cost provision – 93 per cent of UAL’s student activity falls within HEFCE price groups B, C and M. Take one of the world’s big businesses: fashion. To teach it, you need space for huge cutting desks, complex machinery, expensive cloths and looms. Or sculpture, which cannot be taught or practised without a load-bearing floor and ideally a foundry. Jewellery and ceramics need workstations, highly-specialised kit and kilns. Fine art needs studio space. Workshops need extraction systems and the trained supervision of health and safety. Drama needs a theatre, sound desks, lighting rigs and dressing rooms. Yet these are just some of the subjects in which the UK is a world leader.

For much of the sector, this activity takes place in old buildings with high running costs and capital needs. Under enormous cost pressure over decades, excellent teaching has been delivered at the expense of capital investment in buildings.

In fact, no one seriously doubts that costs of provision in the art and design sector challenge the fees cap. When the £9,000 cap was set, it was known that costs at almost every science institution and creative institution in higher-cost areas of the country would rise above the cap in short order. To exacerbate

matters, specialist universities, which make up the bulk of the creative part of the sector, have limited ability to cross-subsidise provision between high and low-cost courses, as can happen in a large university with a broader subject base.

Not even the funding authorities dispute that the current funding model leads to a shortfall between the income and costs of teaching for high-cost specialist providers. In UAL's case, HEFCE identified a £16.12 million gap in public funding in advance of our bid for Specialist Institution Funding. Our institutional TRAC data show a shortfall of 14 per cent against teaching costs in 2012. Costs continue to rise without an accompanying increase in the overall funding envelope, which is being eroded by inflation.

UAL data including TRAC data and financial forecasts

Publicly funded teaching costs per 2010-11 TRAC return (£000s)	109,802
Publicly funded teaching costs inflated to 2012-13 prices (£000s)	115,496
2012-13 Teaching funding from HEFCE, TDA and the SFA (£000s)	38,049
2012-13 Fee income (£000s)	61,326
Total funding and fee income (£000s)	99,375
Percentage of teaching costs covered by fee income and funding	86.0

To tackle this, HEFCE deploys targeted Specialist Institution Funding, the C1 band for high-cost subjects and London Weighting. These measures are not a core part of the funding formula and must be bid for against changing criteria, and specialist funding is not generally accessible to non-specialist universities with large faculties of art and design. Even if eligible, these measures do not bridge the funding gap. Specialist Institution Funding is worth £2.34 million a year to UWS against a £16.12 million gap. Band C1 funding is worth £250 per student compared to Band B at £1,500. All the additional funding that does exist will be vulnerable in the post-election spending review.

Science education experiences the same shortfall, but is not expected to patch together cross-subsidy and temporary funding. The government's STEM strategy recognises science education's central contribution to the talent supply chain of a valuable industry. It receives a strategic funding premium. This is a stable, hybrid approach to funding, whereby students take responsibility for part of the cost of their education and government for another.

This is a remarkably uneven approach. The Government knows the fees model alone does not work for science subjects, so recognises the risk to the supply of talent to a strategically-important industry and provides accordingly. It fails to recognise the same risk to a different industry.

Let us examine the deficit in terms of fee income from students. At UAL, our 2012/13 course costing for Home/EU undergrad-

uate provision averaged out at £9,300. At Central Saint Martins – on UAL's newly built and most space-efficient campus – costs averaged £9,856. Colleges with a higher proportion of classroom courses bring down the overall average.

The deficit is more pronounced at postgraduate level. Maintaining a high-quality postgraduate body is critical to the development of the academic leaders of the future. But the UK market will not bear fee levels anywhere near the cost of delivery. UAL operates a deliberate cross-subsidy for Home/EU postgraduate students, where the standard fee in 2015-16 for most subjects is £8,000 and the average cost is £11,300.

UAL is therefore critically dependent on international fee-paying students to subsidise these gaps. We have been unusually fortunate in the high level of international demand for places at UAL but, from a policy perspective, this cannot properly be regarded as a long-term solution. There is considerable institutional risk within a market which is increasingly competitive, international by nature and can quickly be undermined by government immigration policy. In any case, the total teaching overheads for additional international students, such as language teaching, combined with overseas acquisition costs, offset this income to a large extent. If we accept that the creative subjects, upon the back of which Britain has built its world-leading creative industries, should be taught, we must also accept that they should be funded in a coherent way.

It would not be proportionate to raise the fees cap across all universities simply to cure a structural deficit in the teaching of certain subjects in some universities. We therefore do not advocate this solution, which would perpetuate the idea that the one-size fee-based approach is the best way to deliver well-funded universities.

More sensible hybrid funding has already started to emerge through the provisions made by HEFCE to specialist institutions in science, in addition to fees. The first step, which HEFCE could implement overnight (if it had the funds), would be to make practice-based subjects eligible for Band B funding, with the precedent in conservatoire status for music teaching. The disadvantage is that these provisions are not part of the core funding formula.

This approach should therefore be developed into a consistent, adequate and straightforward premium to recognise the full cost of teaching practice-based creative subjects. This should be funded on a cost-of-delivery basis, correlated to student numbers rather than type of institution. That would remove the structural deficit. It would also enable the cost of higher education to be openly understood and shared between state and student: perhaps a precedent for funding across the sector as a whole.

3. Student engagement and £9,000 fees

Tony Strike, Director of Strategy, Planning and Change
and Paul White, Deputy Vice-Chancellor,
University of Sheffield

The issues Sheffield faced as a result of the change to a maximum £9,000 undergraduate fee arose from the University's position as a leading research and teaching institution, offering a broad range of disciplines – including many regarded nationally as 'Strategically Important and Vulnerable Subjects' and disciplines with long courses of more than three years' duration. As a founder member of the Russell Group, and a university with a global reputation for the high quality of its provision, nothing about the new fee regime suggested to the University's Senate, Executive Board or University Council that there should be any fundamental change in the University's mission or overall shape.

The University's Learning and Teaching Strategy 2011-16, *Global Education in a Civic University*, remained a cornerstone for action. Nevertheless, considerable efforts were made to understand the implications of the change. Sheffield has a proud history of joint working between the University and the Students' Union, and all discussions – including on fee setting, the amount to be devoted to access and outreach, and capital expenditure – included student representatives as key participants. Inevitable emphasis was placed on ensuring that future students would get value for money.

“*Inevitable emphasis was placed on ensuring that future students would get value for money*”

Changes in finance and other variables

In recent years, teaching income (tuition fees and education contracts) has made up around 40 per cent of the University's total income; with other funding council grants, research grants and contracts, endowments and other income (residential and commercial) making up the remainder.

Students subject to the new £9,000 fee regime represented around two-thirds of Sheffield's intake in 2012/13. University recruitment is selecting rather than recruiting and the target intake for home undergraduate students has lain in the range 4,000 to 4,500 for several years.

An important development that accompanied the introduction of the new fee regime was the freeing of number controls for top-grade students, who were defined in a way that seemed arbitrary and which created problems when admitting, for example, students from the wider EU or with widening participation indicators. Because Sheffield historically had admissions standards that were above the national average, the University received relatively few places for students achieving below AAB at A-Level. Although there was initially some expectation that overall recruitment could be increased from among the highest qualified, it was quickly

realised that competition for such students would make this outcome unlikely and probably undesirable in terms of short-term pressures on resources and the student experience. In the event, in 2012/13 new registrations fell in line with the national trend, compared to those entering the previous year, and this lower intake has had an impact on income in subsequent years.

Other important changes occurred alongside the increase in fees. In particular, capital funding for universities was cut. The University had to generate a surplus on its operating activities to cover depreciation and replace its existing capital stock as well as to provide a source of funding for new capital developments.

A further complexity was the requirement for universities to rethink their spending on widening participation, outreach and bursary support. The Students' Union at Sheffield was particularly keen to push such expenditure up, with the aim of maintaining the University's position as one of the best in the Russell Group on key widening participation indicators. Student altruism was such that they set on one side arguments about the opportunity costs of high outreach expenditure – that the amount available for the library or for IT, for example, would be correspondingly less. The University now commits a significant proportion (28.7 per cent) of the difference between £6,000 and £9,000 towards widening access and student success through its agreement with the Office for Fair Access.

Two further elements are important as well: the inclusion of full course costs in the fees and enhancement projects. Even before the National Union of Students had launched its campaign on inclusive fees, Sheffield had decided that the student fee should cover all compulsory additional costs that students had previously paid separately. The most expensive items were field classes and site visits for subjects such as Archaeology, Architecture, Ecology, Geography, and Town Planning. But there were also costs associated with the purchase of personal equipment or safety clothing in various departments in the Science, Engineering and Medical faculties. The most difficult issues arose over compulsory books for students in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, which required clarity over library access to, or personal provision of, set texts.

Initiatives to enhance the student experience were developed as part of Project 2012. Previously, these would have been funded from HEFCE's Teaching Enhancement and Student Success allocation but this was cut at the same time as other aspects of HEFCE funding.

While the media emphasis was on fee increases, changes in these other parameters meant that the impact of the change was wider and more complex than has generally been understood. The University's modelling for the future needed to include:

- overall increases in income from tuition fees for UK and EU undergraduate students;

Project 2012

In December 2010, Professor Keith Burnett, the Vice-Chancellor, announced Project 2012 to coordinate preparation for the new £9,000 funding regime. He indicated that the purpose was 'to engage our whole community – our students, professional service and academic staff – in building on our successes and ambitions, and to lay out clearly the value of what we offer to our students.'

Six work-streams were set up, each composed of a mix of academic and professional services staff, and student representatives. These groups covered specific areas:

- i. The creation of an agreed proposition detailing what all students could expect to receive as part of their education and wider development at the University.
- ii. Consideration of the University's competitive position.
- iii. The creation of the new Access commitment.
- iv. Student expectations, particularly relating to capital projects to benefit their experience – this group made particularly full use of student representatives.
- v. Market research, taking the proposition to an outside audience.
- vi. Modelling projected student numbers, fees, costs and related financial issues.

A crucial complement of the work coordinated by Project 2012 was to develop a new covenant with students and those who support their time at the University. The aim was that the University's dialogue with students and graduates should be a partnership based on trust and mutual goals, rather than a commercial relationship dictated by a market and fees. We wanted to enhance what we offered, to assert the values we held in common, and build stronger partnerships with our students, their supporters and potential employers.

- reductions in HEFCE recurrent grant income – when combined with the fee increase, this meant cuts for some subjects and increases for others;
- changes in student numbers influenced by the higher fee, changed applicant behaviour, greater competition and partial reduction in number controls;
- costs arising from the University's capital investment plans and the impact of reductions in HEFCE capital funding;
- additional costs associated with the required Access Agreement;
- additional costs associated with including all compulsory costs within course fees; and
- additional costs arising from student enhancement, given likely higher student expectations.

To fulfil these needs, the University required a higher annual surplus to support capital investment. The new fees regime of 2012 did not herald a cash bonanza.

The Sheffield Experience

What does the £9,000 fee give students access to at Sheffield? The wording of that previous sentence is important: it is a question of creating opportunities for students and encouraging them to be taken up, not of forcing a particular set of experiences on everyone. The institution is autonomous and seeks to develop autonomy in its students but, as with other institutions, within certain parameters. We recognise

that similar groups of universities make similar offers to candidates and students – Sheffield, as a large comprehensive civic and research-intensive Russell Group institution, has a unique offer to make with the others who share those characteristics. But what it has done is blend those elements in ways that provide distinctive value, culture and flavour to produce the Sheffield Graduate.

This blend is made up of a series of promises to all students, grouped around five themes: your course; your personal development; your support; your community; and your future. Of these, the most exciting has been the one on personal development.

This promise is based on a concept of whole-person education, seeking to extend students' intellectual development beyond their own individual discipline(s), and also developing their wider selves through extracurricular activities, a languages-for-all programme and an extension to existing enterprise and community volunteering activities. Emphasis is placed on co-working with the Students' Union – shown by numerous surveys, including the *National Student Survey* for 2012, 2013 and 2014, to be the best in the country.

Recent reflection on the promises made in 2012 led the University to extend inter-disciplinarity further, and from 2015 onwards all undergraduates will undertake an inter-disciplinary project within their faculty in their first year and a cross-faculty research project in their second. This is a clear benefit of studying in a comprehensive research-intensive university.

“The new fees regime did not bring revolutionary change”

Project 2012 also led to significant student-facing capital investment – despite the loss of HEFCE capital funding – with eight specific projects amounting to over £164 million. These include major refurbishment of the Students’ Union building, a newly-created skills hub and advice centre, a major upgrade of pooled teaching space across the institution and an £85 million new-build to create additional teaching rooms, as well as an extension to a 24-hour Information Commons (blending library and IT facilities).

Conclusion

The new fees regime did not bring revolutionary change at Sheffield. The institution stuck with its overall mission, its strategic plan and its strategies for learning and teaching. The period leading up to the new regime brought a period of reflection, but ultimately a reaffirmation of the direction of travel. Tomaso di Lampedusa, in *Il Gattopardo* (The Leopard) said: ‘If we want things to stay the same, things will have to change.’

Sheffield has wanted to stay the same: delivering world-class education to its undergraduates. But to do so it has had to change certain aspects of its model for educational delivery

and capital financing. To date, students seem very happy with what is offered, as seen in recruitment to targets for numbers, tariff and widening participation, not to mention the University's recent number one position in the *Times Higher Education* Student Experience Survey for 2014.

4. Embedding employability

Richard Brabner, Head of Policy, University of Hertfordshire

Jeremy Paxman criticised the university sector in *The Spectator* in November 2014 for becoming 'more business than vocation'. He unfavourably compared it to the University of the Third Age, which he described as 'much closer to the spirit of what learning ought to be about.' The belief that somehow universities have lost their way, chasing students' fees at the expense of academic freedom, the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake and learning for pleasure is fairly common. But it is misguided.

While hardly anyone disagrees with the notion that education is good in itself, there have been institutions since at least the establishment of the technical colleges in the 1950s, and probably earlier if you count civic universities, with the specific remit of being a key 'anchor' in their economy, providing local businesses and the professions with the skills they need.

What has changed in recent years, due to the combination of a bigger higher education sector, increased fees, league tables and technological change, is a more focused approach on employability and employment outcomes. A recent report for the Higher Education Academy, *Managing the student experience in a shifting higher education landscape* (2014), found that since £9,000 fees were introduced different sorts of universities had implemented reforms to ensure their graduates were more employable. This correlates with the

experience at Hertfordshire. While the primary reason students come to our university has always been to get on in life, employability is now a clearer strategic objective.

Strategic imperative

Since 2006, the University of Hertfordshire has described itself as 'business-facing'. This vision reflects the institution's history as the leading economic pillar in Hertfordshire. Initially, it focused on applied research and knowledge exchange, infrastructure (including establishing a business park) and creating subsidiary companies. These aspects are still important but, over the last few years, we have recognised that we need to do more to make 'business-facing' mean more to students.

What has changed? We now identify and publish a set of attributes our graduates should have by the time they leave. These are based on feedback from employers and include:

- professionalism, employability and enterprise;
- learning and research skills;
- intellectual depth, breadth and adaptability;
- respect for others; and
- social responsibility.

These attributes are at the centre of the university's performance management. During our annual planning round, the process which allocates the university's spending, each Department details how the attributes have been embedded into their courses and outlines the objectives for employability.

It is not a centralised, one-size-fits-all approach. What works for our physics students is different to what works for our historians. Therefore each academic School has developed its own approach but the overall process allows senior management to monitor what is going on in each School, reward success and deal with under-performance.

Investment

Ensuring our students have the right attributes costs money. Higher fees have protected us in comparison to parts of the public sector, but there has not been any real additional income. In 2010/11, our income from home and EU fees combined with the HEFCE recurrent grant was £107 million. In 2013/14, it was £109 million. There are slightly fewer undergraduates at the university today than in 2011/12, but what looks like a small increase in funding per student has been wiped out by inflation. The University, like many others, constantly reviews its processes to make savings and has achieved around £5 million of efficiency savings in the last three years, largely from new and renegotiated contracts.

One beneficiary of the current approach has been the Careers, Employment and Enterprise Service. Its budget has increased by 20 per cent since 2011 to around £1 million per annum, which has helped pay for 14 extra staff. This investment has supported greater collaboration between the Careers Service and the academic Schools, so that together they can develop bespoke approaches to employability and employment.

Employability

The Careers Service works in partnership with our academic Schools to create a curriculum that reflects the needs of employers. Our School of Physics, Astronomy and Mathematics created a professional skills module to help develop students with writing, presentation and team-working skills. This takes place in the second year and includes activities such as running an open night at our Observatory and organising a mentoring programme in Schools. The National Health Service commissions £18 million worth of programmes at Hertfordshire, which has helped us invest in simulation suites and laboratories for our pharmacy, radiography, nursing and paramedic students, who can now practice with difficult situations before they learn in a real-life environment. Our history students develop oral history projects with local organisations, our law students develop their mooting skills in our state-of-the-art mock law court and all our academic Schools support students who want to set up their own businesses. These examples combine practical skill development with the more traditional elements of an academic programme. Investing in high-quality simulation facilities and adding practice to the curriculum help ensure our students can add value to employers from the moment they graduate.

Employment

A failure to connect universities with small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) is a barrier to wider economic growth. This problem often exists because SMEs are so preoccupied with

“*Students who undertake placements get better grades and have better careers, so we want to extend them to as many students as possible*”

the day-to-day running of a business that they rarely have the time to find out how universities can be the solution to their skill shortages. In order to overcome these challenges, our Careers Service set up a team focused on directly engaging micro and small businesses so that they are aware of the opportunities available in recruiting our students and graduates into full-time jobs, paid internships and sandwich placements. This has made a big difference. In the last year, the number of advertisements from micro, small and medium-sized businesses for internships, placements and graduate jobs at our online careers hub has increased from around 800 to 1,700.

One of the most notable aspects is the growth of sandwich placements. Students who undertake placements get better grades and have better careers, so we want to extend them to as many students as possible. The majority of our sandwich placements have been with large employers and we need to encourage a greater and more diverse supply of placement opportunities. We are confident more students are now taking a placement at SMEs than ever before, but policy could help too. The Government offer a small grant to SMEs that take on their first apprentices because they recognise the disproportionate costs involved. The same argument applies

for SMEs that take on their first placement student, so we believe the scheme should be extended. By offering this grant to SMEs that take on a placement student, the Government will help micro and small businesses recruit better qualified and skilled staff, boosting growth.

Outcome and Conclusion

So has the focus on employability and employment made a difference? It is too early to make a firm judgment but the initial signs are encouraging. The latest figures show that 93.2 per cent of our graduates were in employment six months after graduating – exactly the same as for the Russell Group universities combined. We also punch above our weight in terms of graduates going to graduate-level jobs.

As the HEA report showed, Hertfordshire is typical of many universities in the world of £9,000 fees in developing strategies to support employability and employment. When talking down higher education today, Jeremy Paxman should explain to our students exactly why he thinks we would be better off focussing on his idea of ‘what learning should be about’. He is a brilliantly charismatic broadcaster, so students would no doubt find it a popular vision – until they graduate.

5. Explaining student fees to students

Martyn Riddleston, Director of Finance,
University of Leicester

The introduction of the new funding system for universities has transformed how the finances operate at Leicester and the income from student fees has been crucial in allowing the University to be able to invest throughout the current difficult financial climate. This case study sets out the impact of the new fee system on the University, how and why we have sought to communicate with our students and the wider context of this reporting.

The impact of the new fee system at Leicester

- Since 2010/11, the University's total income has grown from £261 million to £285 million, an increase of 9 per cent.
- Over the same period, the proportion of total income that comes from tuition fees has increased from 34 per cent to 47 per cent and is forecast to reach 51 per cent in 2014/15 – a key milestone where more than half of our total income will come directly from tuition fees.
- The University has faced significant cost pressures and our emphasis on continuing to invest has reduced the surplus from 3.4 per cent of income in 2010/11 to 1.8 per cent forecast in 2013/14.
- But the University has continued to invest. Annual spending

on infrastructure with capital investment has averaged £36.6 million over the past two years, an increase on the average annual spend of £23 million over the previous five years.

- Investment in facilities has led to a transformation in the student experience – we have invested £32 million in a new library that opened in 2008, £17 million in the Students' Union that reopened in 2011 and over £11 million in new sports facilities that opened in 2012. We are currently constructing a new £43 million medical building that will house the majority of teaching for our medical degrees when it opens in autumn 2015.

The importance of income from students has increased since the new fees system was introduced and communicating this to students as an absolutely key group of stakeholders has been given a high priority.

How and why we have sought to communicate with our students

At Leicester, there is a strong track record of the University and the Students' Union working closely together – we have student representation on many University teams and committees. The Students' Union President is a member of the University's Senior Management Team, and there are student members of Senate, the Finance Committee, the Estates Strategy Committee and many other groups.

Alongside our awareness of how student fees have become more crucial in funding the University, in the autumn of 2012 the Student Union President came to the Senior Management

“The Student Union President came to the Senior Management Team to say students wanted to know what their fees were paying for”

Team to say students wanted to know what their fees were paying for and were also asking for evidence of value-for-money. They had been calculating the cost of each lecture and seminar on the basis of their total fees divided by the number of contact hours and ended up questioning what their fees were being spent upon. We found it very significant that the students were thinking in this way as they had not previously been proactive in seeking financial information from the University.

The initial request was for some information for the Students' Union to be able to use but we felt that a better approach would be for us to work together to present data that would show students in a simple and transparent way how the finances of the University work.

University finances are complex and we felt that it was important to outline areas such as the relationship between research and teaching. With many sources of funding for our activities in each department, there is no simple answer to what we spend fees on and we do not identify what any single funding source is paying for in most areas of the University. Multiple funding sources – such as HEFCE grants, student fees and contributions from research grants – all contribute to funding departments within the University.

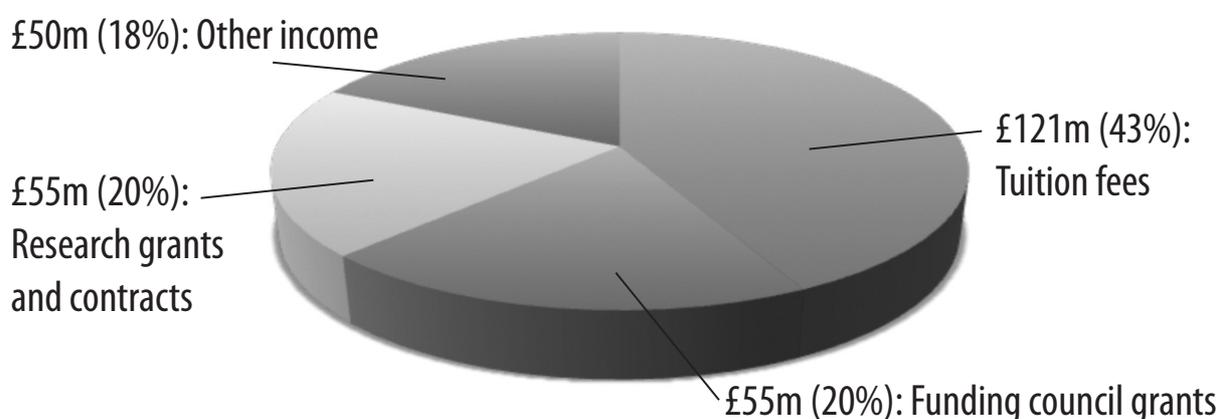
In seeking to communicate with students how the student fees fit into the wider picture of University funding, we produced analysis that would:

- be simple to understand;
- explain why value for money is more than just fees paid divided by contact hours; and
- outline wider issues with the University's finances, including why we need to generate a surplus and the link between research and teaching.

We decided to communicate through a website that is updated each year: www2.le.ac.uk/study/fees/the-university2019s-finances-2013-how-do-my-fees-fit-in. The feedback from the Students' Union President was positive and the web page has received over 10,000 visits since it was launched in 2012.

We felt it important to highlight the composition of income and expenditure and prepared two simple pieces of analysis to do this. The income was split into just four categories: funding council grants; tuition fees; research income; and other income.

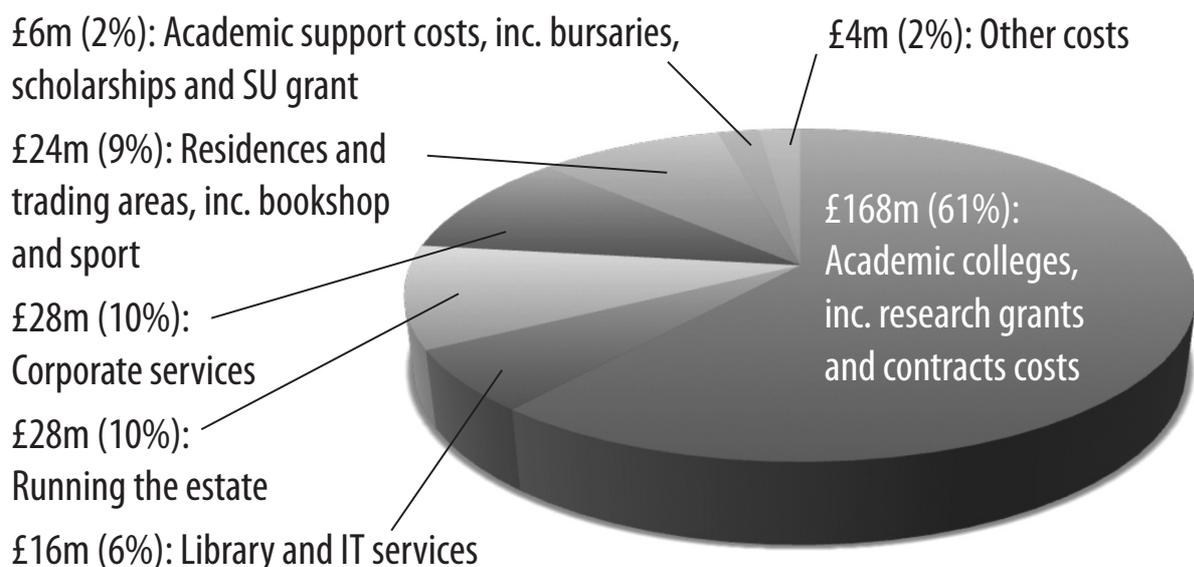
Where does the university's income come from?



“Institutions could be more imaginative in how financial information is presented”

On the expenditure side, we felt the ‘normal’ (or financial statement) categories of expenditure would not be meaningful for this process and therefore reanalysed expenditure into areas such as ‘running the estate’. The pie chart that we used also highlights that the majority of our expenditure is related to the delivery of our academic activities.

What does the university spend its money on?



In explaining why it is vital for the University to make a surplus, we linked this to campus development. We also used the analogy of other purchases to demonstrate the added value that students enjoy beyond the contact hours for their

course. This includes the quality of teaching and facilities such as the library, academic and personal support services, careers advice and the Students' Union.

The wider context

Our presentation of the material fits with many of the recommendations of the HEFCE report *Research into options for the presentation of financial information* (2014). This considered current practice in how higher education institutions present their financial information, experience in other areas (such as local authorities) and the results of a survey of students completed by the National Union of Students. The report found institutions could be more imaginative in how financial information is presented and emphasised that the principles of effective financial reporting are that it should be: focused; open and honest; clear and understandable; and interesting and engaging. The report outlined options for reporting, including data tables, narrative text, pie charts, bar charts and infographics.

Overall, we have found the experience of working with our Students' Union on presenting this information to be positive from both ends. University finances are complex but it is right to be transparent with our students on how their fees fit into the wider context of how we operate.

6. Where quick minds meet

Matthew Batstone, Co-Founder and Director,
New College of the Humanities

New College of the Humanities: An overview

New College of the Humanities (NCH) was born from a mix of frustration and idealism shared by Professor AC Grayling and thirteen other academics, including Peter Singer, Sir Partha Dasgupta, Stephen Pinker and Richard Dawkins. This distinguished group believed two things particularly strongly.

First, that the humanities and social sciences are fundamentally important to a well-ordered society. We are, of course, not just people who work: we are voters, husbands and wives, parents, friends and active participants in our communities. Society needs people who understand that we share our values through stories, people who can question orthodoxies and people who can derive truth from the past and other cultures. In the context of our professional lives, the defining qualities of leadership – valuing creativity, empathy, rigour and presenting charismatically and persuasively – are skills arising from a serious study of the humanities. It is people with these capabilities who will ensure the UK pays its way in the world. The instrumentalist attitude sometimes heard from government and big business – that only STEM subjects matter – is misconceived and wrong. The humanities are under threat and deserve to be taught properly.

Secondly, higher education is at an inflection point and the sector needs innovation. Pressure on the old model is coming from multiple sources, including technological advances, financial strictures and global competition. The cat no longer has to be skinned in the same old way and many academics, schools, employers and students, as well as their parents, want change.

Innovation can come in multiple forms, but the NCH founders felt there was a hole among the panoply of alternatives that will be available to students in the coming decades.

This chapter will look at the three principal areas of innovation at the College:

- its programme;
- its revenue model, which has been the most controversial part of the offering; and
- its cost structure.

It will also discuss how Government policy impedes new entrants and offer some explanation as to why, despite an ostensible liberalising agenda and the many advantages of UK education, so few people have been willing to launch new and innovative offerings.

An innovative programme

There is a truism that regularly appears in the quality press and fuels the dinner party chat of some policymakers. It goes like this. The conventional career path will become a rarity.

People will work in multiple roles across different industries, sometimes at the same time. There will be an increasing pace of change, so that in many industries it is impossible to predict what specific vocational skills will be necessary. For many degrees, the certificate is barely framed before the graduate's hard-won capabilities are obsolete. What if this truism is actually true. Should we not do something about it?

The answer to that question for NCH is: yes – and we are.

While developing our concept and testing it through research and collaborative discussion with a number of parties, including the Confederation of British Industry, we felt that in order to survive and flourish a graduate must have three qualities above all:

- they must be clever;
- they must have the curiosity to want to know how the pieces fit together; and
- they must have the appetite to put their mark on the world.

It was this insight that informed the creation of our programme. We wanted a course of study that was deep and wide. It needed to allow students to see how the dots were joined across disciplines. It had to strengthen the intellectual muscles but also build practical capabilities. It is not much good being a brilliant thinker if you cannot get anything done.

So our students take a single-honours degree in a humanity or social science. They must in addition study modules from other degree programmes. They all take some core modules:

“If you’re interested in daytime television, don’t come to NCH”

Applied Ethics; Logic and Critical Thinking; and Science Literacy. They also participate in the Professional Programme, a mini MBA which is constructed around project work.

In total, it is almost double what a student at a typical Russell Group University will experience. If you’re interested in daytime television, don’t come to NCH.

Alongside the programme is our pedagogic method. The hub of a student’s week is the one-to-one tutorial. It is quite simply the gold standard of learning with no hiding place for the student – nor the teacher. But it is team work that is prized outside universities, not the methodology of academic study, which by necessity tends to have a substantial element of working in isolation. At NCH we not only coach our students on working in teams, but we put students in teams for certain assignments – and mark the team. Our students learn through the process of doing.

In the spirit of TS Eliot’s dictum ‘Immature poets imitate, mature poets steal’, you will find elements of the NCH programme in the Oxbridge tutorial system, the US liberal arts colleges, some of the best international business schools and brilliant smaller institutions like London’s School of Communication Arts. But nowhere else has quite the same intensive and compelling mix.

The success of this programme is evidenced by research using the same questions and the same research company, Youthsight, as the HEPI / HEA *Academic Experience Survey*. Highlights include that 63 per cent of NCH students say the College exceeds their expectations (versus 28 per cent for Russell Group Humanities and Social Science students). NCH students are set an average of 13.7 assignments a term (6.19 at the Russell Group) and 84 per cent of feedback is given in person (40 per cent).

An innovative fee model

What captured all the headlines as the College announced its existence was a number: £18,000 – our top tuition fee. In fact the number is £17,640, but that is perhaps by the by. The coverage NCH received was mostly negative and poorly researched. It frequently ignored or wilfully misinterpreted the nature of our model.

The College certainly believes in excellence, but also thinks that, if you provide an education as good as the one we do, it should be available to everybody. Our Exhibitioners pay £7,200 and our Scholars pay nothing. NCH also contributes to students' living expenses.

We believe this 'Robin Hood' style fee model, imported from the United States, is the fairest way of offering our style of education. In our first two years of operation, we have about 100 students and around 30 per cent pay nothing.

Critics of NCH, who assume the College is simply about giving another alternative to a wealthy elite already burdened by too much choice, are often surprised to find this out. It is frequently the trigger for reappraisal.

This tuition fee model is affordable because of our cost model and our projections for growth.

An innovative approach to cost and operations

The traditional three-year boarding experience offered by most UK universities is expensive. As competition increases for a pool of students which may decline, the temptation is to offer a mix of costly bribes (bursaries for living expenses or free iPads) and to invest in real estate. There are building programmes going on at campuses up and down the country, weakening balance sheets just at the point when students might prefer alternatives to conventional university or no tertiary education at all.

The *Guardian* reportedly spent £100 million on printing presses for its Berliner format ten years ago, when its circulation was over 400,000 a day. It is now 190,000. There was a time when newspapers thought they were immune from the impact of the internet. Universities should not make the same mistake.

For us this means a number of things. To flourish you must offer an outstanding face-to-face experience – not just a lovely café or sports centre, but really personalised teaching.

“*Its only claim to fairness is that it seems to satisfy nobody*”

You need to get your teaching staff doing what they do best and what they enjoy – that is teaching, not filling out forms. You also need to make as many of your costs variable as possible and grow and flex with your student numbers.

NCH has taken no cash or subsidy (in the form of student loans) from the government. It is a healthy discipline, which we recommend in the short term. However, in the medium term, no institution can compete against the weight of government money going to incumbent organisations without participating in its programme.

Problems with the regulatory framework

Britain, with the English language, its international outlook and a deep pool of excellent academics, should be an excellent place to launch a university-level college. Sadly, it is not. Apart from NCH and Pearson College, there have been no new entrants of note since 2010 and the arrival of the Coalition with its ‘liberalising’ agenda.

There are two reasons for this.

First, we have a regulatory environment that is extremely complex. Its only claim to fairness is that it seems to satisfy nobody. It is hard to navigate with its alphabet soup of

agencies. This complexity adds cost and time to the process of starting up. We have spent hundreds of thousands of pounds on legal and other consulting fees and management time, all of which would have been better devoted to our students.

But this is less problematic than the fact that the regulatory environment keeps changing and will change further. It seems likely that there will be a higher education bill at some point after the next election. What is in it will depend on the stripes of the winners. It is likely that it will have a profound effect on all players. Who will invest in the face of such uncertainty?

The second reason is that current regulation concerning new entrants is based on a pillar that is profoundly anti-competitive and stacked in favour of incumbents: the principle of validation. Validation by an existing institution of the qualifications offered by a new entrant is essential if the new entrant wants its students to be entitled to government-supported loans or seeks to sponsor visa applications by overseas students.

If I wanted to launch a new chocolate bar and you said, 'Please do, but only if Mars Bar says it's OK...and, by the way you must pay Mr Mars a large sum of money each year for the privilege', the absolute unfairness would be manifest. Yet this is the system we have in higher education. Of course, we must have guarantees of quality, but the existing system has not done a great job in locking out the cowboys and it has enabled a

cartel of incumbents to exclude people they regard as competitors.

It would be much better to enhance the powers of the Quality Assurance Agency, as the real, independent guarantors of quality but instead a question mark has been put over this body.

Inequities covering the recruitment of non-EU international students are well covered elsewhere, but we too regard the deterrent effect of current policy on overseas students as a major concern.

Conclusion

There is a tendency to look at the international league tables of universities and see the UK at number two and assume all is well. That is a mistake. For a start, if you take the top 500 universities rather than the top 200, the UK is at number four. Moreover the UK's position is eroding.

There is plenty to celebrate in the sector, but if we want consolidation of our success and more innovation and if we do genuinely believe that competition is the 'rising tide that lifts all boats', then we must put in place a genuinely fair regulatory regime to support it.

7. Why does university cost so much?

Carl Lygo, Vice-Chancellor of BPP University

We have all heard those anecdotes from students. 'We only have six hours of classroom teaching each week', said one student to me from a well-known public university located in London. 'I am in my second year and I am told university is all about private study not spoon-feeding. I just don't think we are getting value for money.' She went on to explain that most of her teaching is conducted by doctoral students (in fact I started my own teaching career doing something similar three decades ago). This student is paying £9,000 per year for six hours teaching per week over 32 weeks of an academic year – does that represent good value for money?

Discussions around the long-term sustainability of the UK's higher education sector tend to build upon an assumption that there must be more undergraduate funding, rather than questioning whether the current funding represents best value for money for taxpayers and students. Even daring to question why undergraduate fees need to be so high invites derision. The argument whether the state should subsidise more, the individual student pay more or the university providers offer loans for students all miss any discussion of whether what is being currently provided represents the best value for money. Of course, university education is life changing, the graduate premium to wage earning capacity is

“Why is £9,000 per year the magic number for fees and why should it be uncapped?”

significant and the social value of education is unquestionably very high. But why is £9,000 per year the magic number for fees and why should it be uncapped?

Speaking in the House of Commons on 24 June 2014, the then Minister for Universities and Science, David Willetts said: ‘Our higher education reforms introduced in 2012, following Lord Browne’s independent review, are, we believe, contributing to maintaining the quality of education and bringing more money into universities by contributing more to the costs of education.’ Yet students are unhappy and universities want even more money. I am left asking: ‘Where has all this extra money gone?’ I fear the answer may be that it has gone to boost pension funds, research and Vice-Chancellors’ pay – anything but enhance the undergraduate student experience and the direct costs of undergraduate provision.

The latest HEPI / HEA *Academic Experience Survey* finds that ‘70 per cent of undergraduates at Scottish institutions, who typically pay no fees, believe they are receiving good or very good value for money, compared with only 41 per cent in England, where fees are typically £9,000 per year’.

When asked to list their top three priorities for institutional expenditure, 48 per cent of undergraduates chose ‘reducing

fee levels' (55 per cent for first and second-year students who are subject to the higher fees regime).

I lead BPP University, a private independent University with UK degree-awarding powers granted by the Privy Council. We specialise in education for the professions, in particular accountancy, law and the health sector. *Legal Week* magazine conducted a survey of undergraduate law students and found that BPP University was regarded as the best value for money in the sector (domestic fees at BPP University range from £12,000 to £18,000 for an entire undergraduate law degree, compared to the average in public universities of £27,000). The same *Legal Week* survey also placed BPP as the 5th best university for teaching quality behind Oxford, Cambridge, UCL and Strathclyde (out of 151 recognised university bodies). BPP University started offering undergraduate degrees for the first time in 2009 and is now the largest provider of full-time undergraduate law degrees. It is possible to have high-quality teaching without being research intensive, and to charge a lower tuition fee even in a market where price is used as a proxy for quality.

The HEPI / HEA survey found that the 'average of contact hours per week during term time' is 14.2 hours. The preferred classroom size is smaller groups up to a maximum of 15 students per group: 89 per cent of students agreed they got a lot out of student groups of this size or smaller. Moreover, 35 per cent of students wanted more teaching hours, 35 per cent wanted smaller class sizes, 34 per cent wanted better

training for lecturers and 34 per cent wanted better learning facilities. This starts to tell us something about the economic model needed to support what students want and to answer what should the cost be of undergraduate education.

The typical academic contract for lecturers in the traditional public sector is based on a maximum of '18 hours per week limit for formalised teaching' and a '550 hours maximum of formalised teaching in any one year'. In a recent *Times Higher Education* survey, the average staff salary for all academic staff taken from HESA data was identified as being £47,278. Prospects UK suggests an average lecturer salary of between £33,000 and £43,000. The *Guardian* tracker of average lecturer salaries suggests an average of £36,000 for lecturers. Even taking £50,000 as the average salary with a teaching week of 14.2 hours (79 per cent of the maximum permitted), would suggest a direct teaching cost for a group of 15 students of about £50,000 (plus taxes etc). This compares to the revenues of 15 students which yields £135,000 at a fee level of £9,000 per year. There will be lecturers who teach longer and are paid less, just as there will be those that are paid more and teach less. PhD students teaching undergraduates are paid considerably less than full-time academic faculty.

Added to teaching costs are variable costs, including property, but on the above basis of teaching hours each classroom should yield over £400,000 of income excluding use during evenings, weekends and out-of-term time. An academic year is in fact less than two-thirds of a calendar year. Inefficient use

“I struggle to understand why the direct costs of undergraduate provision are so high”

of real estate and expensive locations are not what students want, nor should the taxpayer be required to fund them. The Russell Group intends to spend £9 billion of capital expenditure over the next five years, comparable to the money spent on the 2012 London Olympics. Most universities are investing in improving their capital infrastructure. Yet in the HEA / HEPI survey only 11 per cent of students saw this as a priority.

Funding also pays for support staff, libraries, the ever increasing burden of regulation, quality assurance costs and internal and external processes. These all add to the costs of university and some of these hidden costs can be big-ticket items. But for library expenses, we have good data from the Society of College, National and University Libraries Annual Library (SCONUL) statistics. The last SCONUL statistics released (2013) indicated that ‘Average library expenditure per FTE [full-time equivalent] student (£358) was almost 3 per cent lower than last year.’ So clearly the extra money for universities is not being spent on library provision. In the HEA / HEPI survey, only 14 per cent of students felt that it was a priority to increase investment in support staff, including such things as careers staff.

I have not begun to touch upon the cost savings that can be obtained from using online technology to deliver improved

and individualised services to all students. I struggle to understand why the direct costs of undergraduate provision are so high.

In the unregulated Masters market there is massive variation in pricing. An MBA at London Metropolitan University will cost a student £10,980 while one at London Business School will cost £64,200. Price will be used as a proxy for quality and if pricing controls are lifted, as Lord Browne's team originally envisaged, then we will certainly see wide variations in fees just as we do today in the Masters market, but that may not be relevant to the direct costs of provision.

A Vice-Chancellor recently claimed I was advocating a 'race to the bottom' and argued 'the UK needs to be reassuringly expensive'. The UK does punch above its weight and it is of prime importance to the future of the UK that we maintain a leading reputation for higher education. The UK is the 6th largest world economy, 22nd when averaged per capita, and yet has seven universities in the top 40 *Times Higher Education* World University Rankings. The UK is ranked second behind the US in terms of research, with the Asian tigers fast catching up.

The UK has 151 recognised university bodies. So are we really saying that all universities need to be funded the same at undergraduate level so that seven universities may continue to appear in the top 40 World University Rankings based on the quality of research? An undergraduate degree has become what A-Levels were in the 1960s and 1970s (only 13

per cent of pupils stayed on to do A-Levels in the mid 1950s). We do a massive disservice to future generations by lumbering them with big debts (however the politicians may describe it) before they have even joined the workforce.

The Coalition has put more emphasis on individuals repaying the cost of their higher education once their salary gets to a certain level. The Labour Party seem to be tied to lowering the headline fee to £6,000 but replacing the lost income to universities with direct taxpayer subsidy. Either way, there is an acceptance that the cost of university is the cost of university and it cannot be reduced. Universities ask for more, and of course why would you charge less if you can charge more? It is not surprising that the Competition and Markets Authority is interested because greater competition may well be the answer.

8. A different experience on the same campus

Ian Dunn, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience),
Coventry University

Coventry University College (CUC) was established as a wholly-owned subsidiary company of Coventry University in September 2011 and opened its doors to students in September 2012.

Why establish a competitor institution?

CUC was, in part, established as a response to the raising of home and EU undergraduate fee levels to a maximum of £9,000 and the concern that this could disadvantage students with widening participation backgrounds. It also recognised that many of these students attempt to enter higher education with lower entry qualifications and the door to such students, although potentially wider, is sometimes a revolving one. Cost and quality was the challenge.

Rather than offer more of the same, CUC had a unique opportunity to develop a curriculum, teaching methodology and assessment strategy that stripped out traditional barriers to entry and success: higher education that was not 'HE in FE' and which was more obviously accessible than much private provision, at a price that was more attractive than the ubiquitous £9,000. Fees are £6,500 for science and engineering courses and £5,500 for all others in 2014/15.

What sort of provision does CUC offer?

The curriculum devised provides qualifications from Year 0 to degree, with exit and entry points at each stage. Each stage results in an award (Foundation Cert, HNC, HND or Honours Degree), enabling students to leave and rejoin at a later date if necessary. Students who have obtained HNC or HNDs elsewhere can enter at the appropriate next stage. Modules are independent from each other and the assessment is self-contained allowing entry and exit points, with thirty CATS (Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme) points per module.

CUC offers a highly vocational curriculum with most of the courses designed around professional body qualifications. This provides a complementary mix of employability skills and academic knowledge and allows students to achieve professional qualifications alongside academic awards.

CUC offers subject areas that include, law, accountancy, management, finance, sales, marketing, tourism, IT and policing. Unlike most similar provision, however, CUC also offers general science and engineering courses. All the teaching takes place in the College building, which stands separate from Coventry University but is situated at the heart of the university campus. CUC students have their own library within the College, but also have access to Coventry University's library facilities.

Teaching and Learning

As part of CUC's commitment to high-quality teaching and learning and to give students the best chances of success, the College has high contact hours: twenty hours per week for full-time students (eighteen hours in classes of no larger than fifty students and two hours of tutorials with a maximum of five students). This provides students with the opportunity to work closely with tutors through guided learning opportunities. The small tutorials then allow students to discuss any areas they are finding difficult.

Modules are taught independently over six-week learning blocks so students only ever have to hand in one piece of coursework or assessment at any one time – usually at the end of each block. Assessments take the form of individual and group coursework, which is vocationally relevant, because the College does not believe that written examinations will help students in the world of work. The wide range of assessment techniques used at CUC (reports, essays, coursework and tests) ensure that students have every opportunity to demonstrate their skills and knowledge.

The full-time student has a timetable that is simple and fixed, either mornings or afternoons, four hours each day, five days a week. Modules are taught in six teaching blocks across the year. The whole aim is to provide flexibility that allows a student to join and leave the College at a variety of points and to manage the pace of their own learning and their ability to earn money to live or pay fees. Part-time students study a

“Part-time students study a couple of evenings a week or all day on Saturdays”

couple of evenings a week or all day on Saturdays and have eight hours of face-to-face tuition and twelve hours of on-line supported learning. This allows a part-time student who wishes to put in a great deal of effort to complete a degree within three years. The lifting of the cap on student numbers means these students will now be able to take out the full-time tuition loan and study in this mode while maintaining their working life. This has to be a major positive when every Local Enterprise Partnership is talking about the need for the up-skilling of the workforce.

Is the College working?

Recruitment has exceeded initial expectations with full-time numbers ahead of target by 50 per cent in our first year (CUC recruited 629 full-time students in year one and 640 full-time in its second year of operation) and currently over 300 students study for their degrees on a part-time basis. CUC focuses on the key quality indicators of student retention and success. In the first two years of operation, the College retention rates stood at 93 per cent, with 88 per cent in a position to progress.

While many Foundation Level (Year 0) students elect to continue with CUC, 40 per cent progressed to degree programmes at Coventry University and a further 40 per cent received offers from other universities. It is unlikely that these students, having only gained low entry points aged 18, would have had so many options had they not attended CUC.

Attendance and student performance is monitored closely and action is taken where students appear not to be engaged. Students are surveyed regularly throughout their programme and a full survey of their experience is undertaken at the end of each module.

Quality thresholds are in place and any module falling below the threshold is deemed to be 'in recovery'. The module is investigated and a detailed action plan is devised and implemented within the timeframe of the subsequent module. The original course design was always on the basis that the quality of delivery and student perception was paramount. To this end, the student evaluations of both the content and the quality of teaching have a direct impact on the teaching.

Staffing, governance and finances

The College has an entirely separate workforce from the university. The academic staff have a similar profile to those within any teaching-led institution, and around 30 per cent have PhDs. All teachers have a professional qualification or professional experience and all have or are working towards a teaching in higher education qualification.

“*The College has an entirely separate workforce from the university*”

The administrative function and student support function are operated in a very lean manner, with certain ‘core’ services being procured from the university under service-level agreements. The whole activity has a dynamic feel, with a flat structure and very involved people. There is a growing view that this type of model operates best with fewer than 3,000 students, so that the community feel and staff engagement can be maintained.

The College is established as a company limited by share and has a board made up of executive and non-executive members and CUC publishes annual accounts. Financially, the College is designed to make a reasonable return to the University and be capable of investing in its own development, while keeping fees low.

The future

The success of the model has now opened up further opportunities. CUC introduced Access to HE Diplomas aimed at adult returners in September 2012, and from September 2014 will be accepting international students. The model transfers well to international students that may benefit from the high level of class contact. The Foundation year programmes are

proving popular because international students see them as the perfect opportunity to get used to UK life and study before the challenges of a full-degree programme.

Coventry University College is a growing entity, with a very clearly defined mission. As HE changes and expands, clarity of mission and business focus will undoubtedly become ever more important. For these reasons it is a clear possibility that further divisions of Coventry University College could be envisaged in other locations, depending on the same packaged curriculum and running the same business model but with independence to offer local solutions for skills development. It is possible that ultimately the model will be sufficiently developed to be able to demonstrate high standards of taught-degree provision which could encourage the seeking of taught-degree awarding powers.

The College firmly believes that our unique model has helped to fill a gap in the educational market that has given more people the opportunity to benefit from higher education – with more young people from disadvantaged backgrounds applying to, and being admitted to, CUC than any other higher education institution.

9. Higher education in a sixth-form college

Alex Day, Director of Adult and Higher Education,
Peter Symonds College

Peter Symonds College is a large sixth-form college offering a broad choice of A-Level courses for 16 to 19-year olds of all academic abilities within the community of Winchester and the surrounding area. On a separate site, the College offers a range of undergraduate programmes and one Masters programme. Student numbers in higher education have grown from 40 in 2009/10 to over 170 in 2013/14.

While the Government expressed a desire to have a disparity in university fees, the majority of universities have adopted course fees of £8,000 to £9,000 *per annum*. If universities have been unable to offer lower fees in the new funding regime, then it begs the question: is it possible to deliver good quality higher education at a lower cost?

The answer to this question is: yes, it is possible. However, there are two caveats: the subject being taught; and whether the organisation is trying to provide a traditional undergraduate university experience. Undoubtedly, different subjects have different cost bases. For example, we would not be able to deliver engineering or bioscience. However, we can deliver subjects like sport and sport injury treatment as well as many

“*Students get a lean approach focused on teaching and learning*”

arts-based subjects, which generally require a standard classroom environment and small amounts of specialised technical equipment.

Additionally, if you are trying to deliver lower-cost higher education you are unlikely to be able to offer an extensive range of extra-curricular activities and impressive students' union buildings. In other words, students do not have all the bells and whistles typically associated with undergraduate higher education in a university. Instead, students get a lean approach focused on teaching and learning. A further potential barrier is student access to academic journals – although as a college we have invested in this, exposing students to a wide variety of academic material will remain a challenge unless open access becomes the norm.

Sixth-form colleges, along with the rest of the further education sector, have for many years had to focus on efficiency and cost effectiveness. They have always had to operate on a lower cost base per student than universities. The average funding per learner in a sixth-form college is £4,560 per A-Level student and, according to OFFA, the average full-time undergraduate fee was £8,507 in 2013/14. Concepts such as lean management structures, maximising room usage and teaching hours are all applied to keep costs down.

In addition, the primary focus of staff providing higher education in a college environment is teaching and learning. Although they do engage in scholarly activity, it is centred around what they are teaching and is not research into a completely different dimension of their subject. This is a different culture to that of universities, which have been strongly encouraged to focus on research. In colleges, teaching and learning is the key driver and aspect that staff are interested in enhancing. So what is delivered in the classroom is 'expertly focused' on the specified curriculum and the pedagogic approach is tailored to the needs of specific students.

Provision of higher education programmes at Peter Symonds College began in its current form in 2008 with the validation of a Foundation Degree in Counselling. In 2009/10, the College moved to validated provision through Middlesex University and began to develop a suite of degrees within a framework. This framework is a further factor enabling our college to maintain low fees without sacrificing quality as it enables a pragmatic approach to the delivery of higher education through common modules which are then contextualised to a specific subject. This helps to ensure that class sizes are viable and allows teaching staff across disciplines to share resources. Specific modules can be developed together, benefiting from the pooling of individual expertise and experience and the sharing of good practice across programmes. It also allows standard processes and formats to be adopted, so that courses operate as a whole and not as standalone subjects from an institutional perspective.

So how is the student fee of £3,950 a year charged by the college broken down? Each individual course will be slightly different in terms of how the fee income from students is allocated. A number of factors can skew the percentage of the fee income allocated to tuition. For example, if the group size is small then the percentage of fee income allocated for teaching will be higher per student. A similar effect will occur if the programme has a large number of optional modules, as this means there is a higher potential to split cohorts into smaller groups. Conversely, the greater the opportunity to teach cohorts from different programmes together, then the lower the percentage of fee income spent on tuition. The figures below are a rough average, based on a standard programme with a group size of ten students.

<i>Activity</i>	<i>% of student fee</i>
University fee for accreditation services	17%
Tuition/student study support/tutorials/pastoral care. Includes element for scholarly activity.	42%
Overheads includes: cost of running buildings, depreciation, admissions, administrative staff, staff development, computing hardware and IT facilities, development and maintenance of virtual learning environment, quality assurance, library resources & staffing, marketing, student services, programme management, subscriptions to QAA / UCAS, programme and senior management.	41%

In 2013/14, the college received £30,000 from HEFCE for widening participation. This grant was spent on providing

academic support tutors and increasing awareness of the college's programmes to more hard-to-reach potential students.

Teaching in colleges is often more interactive and supportive than in universities. This reflects significant investment in the development of teaching and learning strategies and effective pastoral care systems. Students attending higher education programmes in colleges benefit from close contact with teaching/pastoral staff outside of the classroom and effective systems for monitoring student progress and attendance. Adapting to the higher education environment is not instant and it has not all been plain sailing, and we realise we still have much to do to enhance what we offer our students.

A lean approach focused on teaching and learning is not necessarily what all 18-year olds want, so it is important to understand what type of student is likely to take advantage of it. Much has been made of the decline in student numbers taking part-time degrees. Between 2010/11 and 2013/14 there has been a particularly steep (46 per cent) decline in part-time student numbers.

The world has undoubtedly changed and there has been a change in what students want from part-time study. Anecdotal conversations with our students suggest part-time degrees that take five or six years to complete are too long and that they want an option which allows them to continue working but complete in the 'normal' 3-year time scale. In

order to do this, it is necessary to teach more weeks per year than universities typically do. Colleges are used to working on a 38-week teaching year, which provides the opportunity to teach on a part-time basis and deliver 120 credits per academic year.

Our students do not want to learn entirely online, even though an effective virtual learning environment is essential to complement classroom teaching, and see college attendance offering valuable interaction with fellow students and the opportunity to develop professional relationships with staff. These factors contribute to deeper learning opportunities, which online programmes do not, and enable a true partnership to develop between staff and students in the learning process.

The type of students keen to take advantage of the type of programmes offered at our college are typically aged over 21 (although we are seeing a slow increase in 18-year olds who are seeking an alternative to the traditional university undergraduate lifestyle) and are likely to be working full time, to have a substantial part-time job, to be mothers planning for a return to the workforce or career changers – as well as those who have felt vulnerable through the recession because they are not graduates. Very few of these students would have gone to a university. When questioned about their choice to come to our college, the most frequent response is that the timing of teaching sessions and the location made it easy to attend. The lower fees feel more manageable than £9,000 a

year, and we offer a non-threatening environment – it can feel ‘far less intimidating to step into a college than a university’.

The world is continually changing and, by 2020, over 80 per cent of new jobs created are estimated to be in occupations with a high concentration of graduates. We cannot anticipate all the knowledge these future workers will need and the future might be more about knowing how to retrieve information and then apply it than what you were actually taught as an undergraduate. So, much of what we do is utilising the subject matter and current knowledge to teach higher-level thinking and reflective skills coupled with independent learning skills that are so enabling and essential as the world changes.

A 2013 HEPI report entitled *The impact on demand of the Government’s reforms of higher education* showed the new funding regime may encourage some universities to pursue full-time markets at the expense of other demanding and less rewarding provision, such as part-time courses. They may choose to develop international provision or focus on research. However as new markets for higher education evolve, the gap between the strategies of some institutions and the needs of communities and the economy at local, regional and national level, could widen.

The provision offered in our college addresses a market which some universities may shy away from. Challenging though this particular market is, sixth-form colleges may be able to fill the gap particularly well while also filling in so-called not-

spots, where higher education is not currently available. They already have a reputation for academic excellence and high added value. Research carried out by London Economics and published in *Assessing value for money in Sixth Form education* (2014) demonstrates that sixth-form colleges achieve higher A-Level grades on average than non-selective maintained schools or academies and provide best value for money within the sector. Sixth-form colleges have a 'winning formula' at Level 3 and the experience of our college is that this can be successfully extended into higher-level education in a cost-effective way.

10. Managing resources while promoting success

Professor Craig Mahoney, Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University of the West of Scotland, and Ian McCue, Executive Adviser to the Principal

Background

The University of the West of Scotland (UWS) was formally created in 2007 following the merger of the University of Paisley, Bell College in Hamilton and Craigie College in Ayr. The history of UWS dates back to 1897 when Princess Louise laid the foundation stone for an institution, established from the philanthropic generosity of several local businessmen including the J & P Coates brothers (from the textile industry) and Peter Brough (an industrialist and investor) in Paisley. The University now operates across four campuses in the west of Scotland with over 16,000 students and provides awards at Bachelor, Master and Doctoral levels. The University is led by the Principal and Vice-Chancellor supported by an Executive Group and overseen by a governance body called the University Court.

Within the UK higher education system, UWS has a unique profile with:

- around one-third of UWS students aged 30 and over;
- around one-quarter of students from areas of multiple deprivation; and

- over 1,000 learners progressing from further education to UWS each year, the largest articulation of any university in Scotland.

UWS also receives a greater percentage of its core income from public funds than any other Scottish university.

A Scottish perspective

Across Scotland, funding for both higher education and further education is managed by one body, the Scottish Funding Council (SFC). Following the directions of the Scottish Government, SFC allows Scottish-domiciled students and continental European students access to higher education at a cost not higher than £1,820. The fee is reduced if students can demonstrate insufficient means to pay, SFC then pays the remainder of the student tuition which amounts in total to around £7,000 on average per student (inclusive of the £1,820). In most cases, the total is met for Scottish students and those from continental Europe through funding from the Scottish Government.

Student number controls are used across Scottish higher education, with each university responsible for recruiting to an agreed target of students, while also committing to an institutional Outcome Agreement. This is analogous to the HEFCE Financial Memorandum process in England and agreed with the SFC, with metrics designed to: support

“Around 13 per cent of the UWS student body could be defined as ‘fees only’”

Scottish Government policy; improve the learning experience; add to knowledge; enhance economic benefits to the country; and create a sustainable higher education system.

However, the Scottish Government, through SFC, has encouraged expansion of the Scottish higher education system through ‘fees-only’ students – essentially the continued recruitment of students beyond the number control, for which universities receive only the £1,820 fee per student (and no additional tuition funding). For 2013/14, around 13 per cent of the UWS student body could be defined as ‘fees only’. While this has brought flexibility, and supported widening access and intakes from successful further education learners, it also presents resourcing challenges. In broad terms, with UWS receiving only around one-quarter of normal income for around 13 per cent of its students, this produces a notional income deficit of around £10 million per year.

In addition, success in providing college-to-degree routes comes at a cost of approximately £1.5 million per year in terms of fees paid to colleges and other outgoings, although UWS receives funding from SFC to offset elements of these costs. The overall costs of widening access include outreach activities in colleges and low-participation high schools, non-standard recruitment processes and summer schools. In 2004,

JM Consulting estimated in *The Costs of Widening Participation in Higher Education* that the aggregate cost of attracting, teaching and retaining 'widening access' students was 'around 31 per cent higher than for students from more privileged backgrounds'.

In 2012/13, UWS had around 1,900 students from the 40 per cent most deprived postcodes in Scotland, over half of whom were from the most deprived postcodes of all, known as SIMD20 (Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation). Using the JM Consulting methodology, the additional cost incurred by UWS in supporting these students amounts to over £4.7 million.

These are examples of the limitations of public funding and bring into sharp relief the pressing need for UWS, like all other universities, to diversify its activities and seek growth if it is to make its core business more sustainable.

Nevertheless, UWS is in a positive financial position and able to invest in strategic priorities that will enable it to deliver on the ambitious targets set out in its Corporate Strategy. In 2012/13, the University had a turnover of just over £97.5 million, of which 69 per cent (£67.4 million) came from SFC grants, with the remainder of the income comprising tuition fees, research awards and commercial income. Total costs during 2012/13 amounted to £89.7 million of which 60 per cent (£58 million) were staff costs. Also included within operating costs are fee waivers, bursaries, childcare and discounts amounting to almost £5 million each year.

A challenging environment

While the diversity of the university sector across Scotland, and indeed the UK and beyond, makes it difficult to generalise about forthcoming challenges, PA Consulting's recent report *Here Be Dragons: How Universities are Navigating the Uncharted Waters of Higher Education* makes interesting reading as it summarises a survey of Vice-Chancellors' thoughts on the challenges and opportunities presented by recent and continuing changes in the various funding regimes across the UK. It highlights institutional heads' take on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats presented by the emerging funding picture and higher education environment more generally.

The findings include:

- in terms of the resilience of higher education institutions, there was 'a perception that institutions would split between those that have responded proactively to external risks and those that have been more passive';
- Vice-Chancellors are seeking 'less, rather than more, market management from government';
- there is conservatism in moving towards more flexible delivery offerings with 79 per cent of respondents 'pinning their hopes on growing traditional, on-campus taught degree programmes'; and
- there is a high-level of pessimism over any significant increase in publicly-funded research funding being made available.

More broadly, the report asserts that there appears to be a risk-averse culture inherent in much of the UK higher education sector that is reluctant to engage in diversifying and internationalising their provision.

Dreaming, Believing, Achieving

UWS has recently completed the development of a new Corporate Strategy, which sets out an ambitious vision for a truly contemporary 21st century university that focuses on person-centred learning and prepares graduates with globally relevant skills. In particular, the aim is to transform UWS from a local recruiting university to an international selecting university, by internationalising not just the student intake but also the staff, culture, research and academic portfolio.

The new Corporate Strategy focuses on investment around excellence in the student experience and international activity. Examples of key investments include a commitment to a multi-million pound annually budgeted Strategic Investment Fund and planned investment in information technology of around £13.5 million over the next three to five years, which will transform UWS, putting the university at the forefront of technology-enabled learning. These strategic investment plans are complemented by other investments within academic schools, such as Student Enhancement Developers – essentially hybrid academic / professional

support roles which provide key interventions in the student experience to support student attainment and employability.

In a globalised economy, universities must provide a multitude of opportunities for students having a first experience of higher education to professionals seeking ongoing updating of skills, particularly at Masters level and beyond. Therefore, a key focus for the university is to provide added value to those who study at UWS, with a personalised high-quality experience, for undergraduate entrants from various backgrounds, for professionals seeking higher or professional qualifications and for international students who study in Scotland or on transnational education programmes overseas.

UWS is committed to partnership working with the Scottish Government and the SFC to deliver quality higher education with provision and initiatives designed to meet the needs of local communities, the Scottish economy and society more widely. In the coming decade, UWS will capitalise on talent to develop commercially-focused provision and international activities as a way to promote student success and enhance sustainability in an increasingly challenging environment for public funding.

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