



Higher Education Policy Institute

HEPI Annual Review 2018/19

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Introduction

The Higher Education Policy Institute, or HEPI, is a registered charity established in 2002 'to promote research into and understanding of all aspects of higher education and to disseminate the useful results of such research for the education of policy makers and the general public in the United Kingdom'.

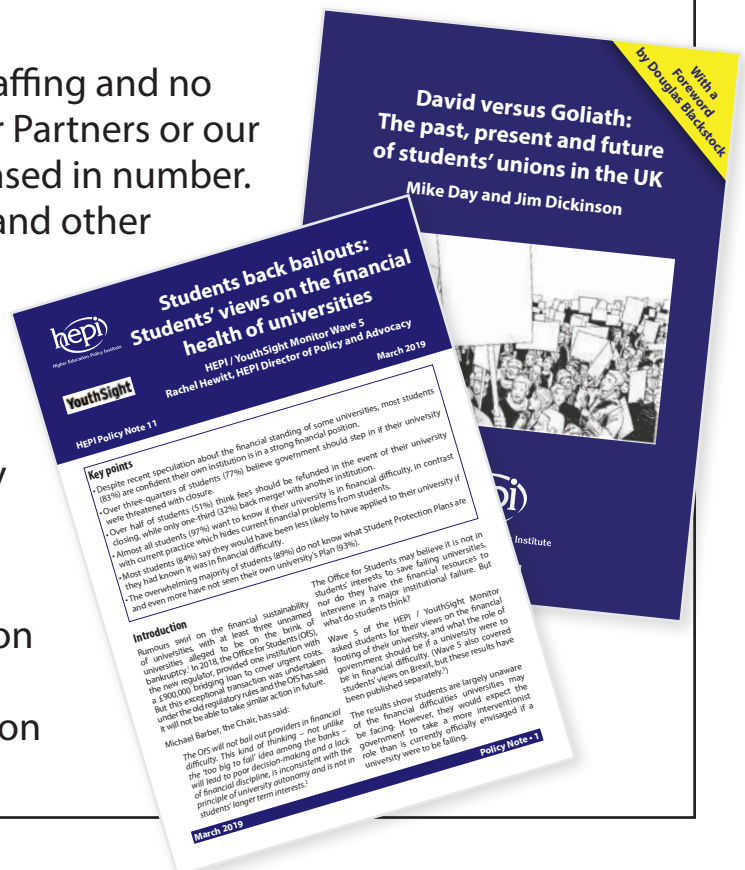
Between August 2018 and July 2019, HEPI matched the record number of publications and events set in 2017/18. We also launched a brand new website and produced more online output, which increased engagement with our work.

While it is never easy to gauge the impact of a think tank, our work influenced the long-awaited Augar report. It was also referenced in various ministerial speeches and reflected in Government policy.

This was achieved with no increase in staffing and no increase in contributions from either our Partners or our University Partners, both of which increased in number. We are very grateful for all the financial and other support that we receive.

In a new initiative for 2018/19, this short Annual Review provides further detail on HEPI's performance over the year. It reflects our commitment to being fully transparent on the use of our resources.

The small HEPI team is guided by an Advisory Board of senior higher education figures, and is accountable to a Board of Trustees as well as the Charity Commission and other official agencies.



1. Publications

In 2018/19, HEPI produced 25 pieces of original research, around one a fortnight. There were:

- **nine full-length Policy Reports ('blue books')**, including an assessment of the tax contributions of international students who stay in the UK to work, *The HEPI / Advance HE 2019 Student Academic Experience Survey*, an assessment of how tuition fees are spent and a report on the history of the Universities' Superannuation Scheme;
- **seven shorter Policy Notes**, covering diverse issues including students' views towards contextualised offers, staff and student wellbeing and student funding in Wales;
- **three Occasional Papers ('red books')** on staff mental health, academic selection and free speech;
- **three Policy Briefing Papers**, produced once per term, primarily for HEPI University Partners, which summarised the biggest issues in higher education; and
- **three press releases separate from our reports**, which incorporated original research on the number of world leaders educated in the UK, students' views towards the EU / contemporary politics and the tenure of UK vice-chancellors over time.

Matthew Percival, CBI Head of Employment Policy, March 2019:

“HEPI's research is an important contribution to filling the knowledge gap identified by the Migration Advisory Committee.”

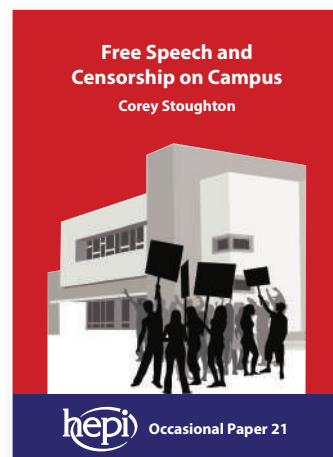
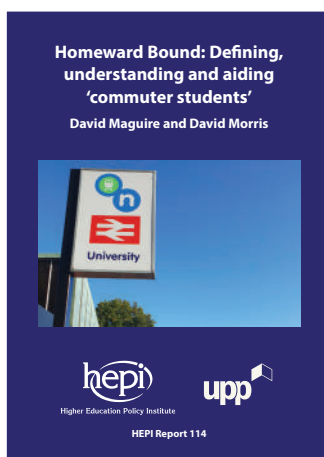
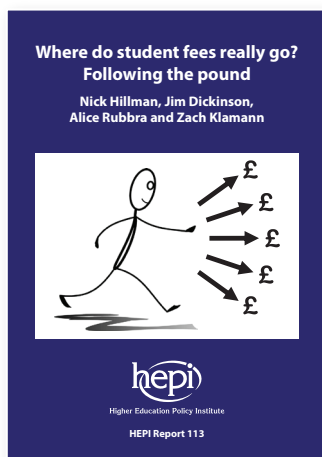
This is comparable to output in 2017/18 and over one-third greater than in every other year since HEPI was founded: 18 publications in 2016/17; 16 in 2015/16; 15 in 2014/15; 10 in 2013/14; and under 10 in earlier years.

Dominic Scott, then Chief Executive of UKCISA, March 2019:

“We can only hope that the new research just being released by HEPI and Kaplan which shows just how much the UK would benefit from enabling much higher numbers of students to work in the UK following their studies, will be heard by the Treasury and others. And, when the politics is right, lead to much wider changes.”

Jonathan Simons, Director at Public First policy consultancy, April 2019:

“@HEPI_news blog is on cracking form at the minute – almost every day's blog is a must-read.”



2. Events

In 2018/19, HEPI hosted 30 events on its own or in conjunction with partners – an average of 10 per university term, including:

- **the HEPI Annual Conference**, with Chris Skidmore (Minister for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation), Nicola Dandridge (Chief Executive of the Office for Students), a panel of vice-chancellors and the launch of the 2019 *Student Academic Experience Survey*;
- **the HEPI Annual Lecture** by Professor Ihron Rensburg, former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Johannesburg;
- **the HEPI Annual Policy Briefing Day**, hosted at London Metropolitan University;
- **two HEPI Partner dinners**;
- **three HEPI / Advance HE House of Commons breakfast seminars**;
- **various policy-focused evening events hosted in conjunction with HEPI Partners**, including three series of roundtable discussions with Elsevier, Lloyds and Research England; and
- **two party conference events**, in partnership with UPP (one at the Labour Party Conference and one at the Conservative Party Conference).

The number of events was the same as in 2017/18 and higher than in every other year: 24 in 2016/17; 16 in 2015/16; 11 in 2014/15; 14 in 2013/14; and under 10 in earlier years.

3. Online activity

In 2018/19, HEPI launched a brand new website and hosted more blog posts. Website hits are a very imperfect measure of our impact because we work closely with a range of media outlets and also send our work direct to people electronically and in

hard copy. Nonetheless, in the last quarter of the financial year, our website hits averaged over 1,000 a day, setting a new record.

Chris Skidmore, Minister for Universities, March 2019:

“It was extremely eye-opening for me to see that very few students are aware these Protections Plans exist. A recent pamphlet published by the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) revealed that 89% of students do not know what Student Protection Plans are and that 93% have not seen their own university's Plan.”

There were 186 separate blog posts of original content, up from 144 in 2017/18, 60 in 2016/17 and 50 in 2015/16. Our three most popular blogs covered how higher education institutions engage with the world beyond campus, staff mental health and A-Level results.

4. Impact

There is no perfect way to measure HEPI's impact – or the impact of any other think tank. However, evidence suggests we had more impact in 2018/19 than in earlier years.

- In November 2018, HEPI intern Vicky Olive won the Wonkhe 'Wonk to Watch' award for her paper on cross-subsidies from teaching to research.
- In July 2019, the Augar report referenced our support for the return of maintenance grants and our call for more transparency on parental contributions, before recommending changes in line with our recommendations on these two issues.
- HEPI's work was often referenced in ministerial speeches – for example, Chris Skidmore referred to our work on the number of world leaders educated in the UK and our research on Student

Protection Plans and Gavin Williamson, the Secretary of State for Education, has referred to our 2018/19 publication on the tax contribution of international students who stay in the UK to work.

The announcement of the return of a two-year post-study work visa came just after the end of our 2018/19 financial year but is understood to have been heavily influenced by the three major pieces of work on international students and post-study work undertaken by HEPI, with Kaplan and London Economics.

8am playbook from Research Fortnight, June 2019:

“ All British universities should share the [HEPI] pamphlet around their senior management teams and the sabbatical officers of their student union. It is good on what the law around free speech actually is, why student protesters are not snowflakes, and the genuine problems of the Prevent legislation. ”

GuildHE, April 2019:

“ New HEPI / Jisc policy note on cyber-security might seem particularly wonk-ish, but it's recommended reading for *all* institutions. ”

5. Looking ahead

As HEPI was originally founded in November 2002, the organisation will come of age in late 2020. In the coming year, we will seek to continue doing all the things for which we are known, while also evaluating our future role in changing times and marking our 18th birthday.

Branwen Jeffreys, BBC Education Editor, June 2019:

“ What are uni students thinking? The @HEPI_news student survey – just out – as always fascinating. New question this year reveals most want parents contacted in mental health crisis – just 18% said no. ”

HEPI staff team during 2018/19



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