HEPI Annual Review 2019/20

Higher Education Policy Institute

The Higher Education Policy Institute is a 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'. HEPI is funded by higher education institutions and other organisations that wish to see a vibrant higher education policy debate shaped by evidence. We are grateful for this continuing support.

Our engagement with policymakers, the higher education sector, the media, students and the public is primarily through our reports, our online presence and our events. We look to work collaboratively with other organisations committed to good public policy. Between August 2019 and July 2020, there were significantly more HEPI publications than in any previous year and more engagement with our work online, including our daily blog. We ran a successful in-person events programme until March 2020, after which HEPI's events moved online.

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

This short Annual Review provides further detail on HEPI's performance in 2019/20, reflecting our commitment to transparency.

1. Publications

In 2019/20, HEPI produced 34 pieces of original research:

- 13 Policy Reports or 'blue books' (up from 9 in 2018/19);
- 11 Policy Notes (up from 7 in 2018/19);
- three Policy Briefing Papers for HEPI University Partners;
- two Debate Papers or 'red books';
- two press releases incorporating original research;
- one Analytical Paper;
- one joint report with Unite Students; and
- one HEPI / Advance HE *Student Academic Experience Survey*.

> Chris Millward, Director for Fair Access and Participation, September 2019:
> *I welcome this report [The white elephant in the room]. The ideas contained in it should help to address one of the major concerns for equality and fairness in higher education today.*

Highlights of the year included: a workstream on postgraduate students (including three reports); a focus on diversity (with reports on reducing racial inequalities and decolonising the curriculum); a look at other countries (with reports on Australia and China); original research on student and staff wellbeing; and polling of students on previously under-explored topics.

We published a more diverse range of authors than in the past, with a better gender balance, two essay collections with multiple authors and a number of reports written (or co-authored) by undergraduate and postgraduate students.

This was a higher written output than in any previous year: HEPI produced 25 pieces of original research in 2018/19; 26 in 2017/18; 18 in 2016/17; 16 in 2015/16; 15 in 2014/15; 10 in 2013/14; and under 10 in each earlier year.

2. Events

In 2019/20, HEPI hosted 24 events, either on its own or in conjunction with others, including:

- eight webinars, including events with the Minister for Universities and the Shadow Minister for Universities and two joint webinars with Advance HE on the 2020 *Student Academic Experience Survey*;

- six policy-focused dinners and four roundtables around the UK, including events at the Labour and Conservative Party conferences;

- two parliamentary breakfast seminars, hosted jointly with Advance HE, on institutional governance and how geopolitics affects higher education;

- two launch events, including the UK release of the OECD's *Education at a Glance* report; and

- one half-day expert policy seminar and a separate conference, co-hosted with PwC, on the value of higher education.

Regrettably, the COVID-19 pandemic meant many HEPI events that would usually have taken place – including our Policy Briefing Day and our Annual Conference – had to be cancelled in 2020, but we launched a new programme of HEPI webinars during the crisis.

As a result of the pandemic, the total number of events in 2019/20 was slightly lower than in 2018/19 (30) and 2017/18 (30), the same as in 2016/17 (24) but higher than in 2015/16 (16); 2014/15 (11) and 2013/14 (14).

> **Charlie Ball, Head of HE Intelligence at HECSU / Prospects, April 2020:**
> *Obviously it's always worth reading anything HEPI put out.*

> **Lord Adonis, former Minister for Schools, September 2019:**
> *William [Whyte]'s paper is quite brilliant, it made me think this topic is much more important than I thought before. And I've changed my view.*

3. Online activity

In 2018/19, HEPI launched a new website, which extended our reach in 2019/20. We developed our online presence while continuing to print all HEPI's major pieces of research.

The COVID-19 crisis provided additional material and the change in working patterns, with more people working from home, encouraged people to engage with HEPI's online output. We achieved over half a million hits (510,000) for the first time in 2019/20, up over 40% year-on-year from 300,000 hits in 2018/19, 230,000 in 2017/18, 160,000 in 2016/17 and 130,000 in 2015/16.

There were 254 separate blog posts, more than in any previous year (186 in 2018/19, 144 in 2017/18, 60 in 2016/17 and 50 in 2015/16).

> **Jon Richards, UNISON Head of Education and Local Government, October 2019:**
> *I heartily recommend to anyone working in HE the daily morning email posts from @HEPI_news.*

Conclusion

Overall, in 2019/20, we produced more output than ever before, raising HEPI's profile and impact.

However, in common with other organisations, including other small charities, HEPI's income fell. The scope for working with others reduced during the COVID-19 crisis, producing the first financial deficit since 2013/14. So a series of cost-saving measures has therefore been agreed by the small HEPI staff team and the HEPI Trustees, which will be implemented in 2020/21.

As the pandemic and other big changes, including Brexit, raise a host of tricky educational policy questions, our goal in 2020/21 – HEPI's 18th year – will be to become more efficient without losing impact.

> **Patrick Watson, education blogger, April 2020:**
> *No other think tank consistently publishes so many good + topical reports.*

August 2019

Two sides of the same coin? Brexit and future student demand
Nick Hillman, HEPI Director

HEPI Policy Note 15 — August 2019

HEPI Policy Note 15

August 2019

University governance in a new age of regulation:
A conversation between Professor Steven Jones and Nick Hillman, with a Foreword by Professor Michael Shattock

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HEPI Report 119

September 2019

The soft-power benefits of educating the world's leaders
Nick Hillman, Director of HEPI, and Tom Huxley, freelance researcher

HEPI Policy Note 16 — September 2019

September 2019

THE NEW REALISTS
Unite Students Insight Report 2019

UNITE STUDENTS

September 2019

The white elephant in the room: ideas for reducing racial inequalities in higher education
Edited by Hugo Dale–Rivas

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HEPI Report 120

October 2019

At what cost? Students' views on Augar, funding and the cost of living
HEPI / YouthSight Monitor Wave 7
Rachel Hewitt, HEPI Director of Policy and Advocacy

HEPI Policy Note 17 — October 2019

October 2019

Student loans for those on long prison sentences
Ruth McFarlane, Senior Manager, Students in Secure Environments, The Open University

HEPI Policy Note 18 — October 2019

November 2019

Somewhere to live: Why British students study away from home – and why it matters
William Whyte

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HEPI Report 121

November 2019

ELECTION BRIEFING
Nick Hillman and Rachel Hewitt

HEPI Policy Note 19 — November 2019

Sign up to our mailing list at www.hepi.ac.uk

December 2019

Students or data subjects? What students think about university data security
Rachel Hewitt and Michael Natzler

HEPI Report 122

December 2019

Policy Briefing
Developments in higher education policy and practice • December 2019

Student accommodation

December 2019

Social mobility and elite universities
Lee Elliot Major, Professor of Social Mobility at the University of Exeter, and Pallavi Amitava Banerjee, Senior Lecturer at the Graduate School of Education, University of Exeter

HEPI Policy Note 20 — December 2019

January 2020

A Languages Crisis?
Megan Bowler

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HEPI Report 123

January 2020

Social Mobility and Higher Education: Are grammar schools the answer?
Edited by John Furlong and Ingrid Lunt

Occasional Paper 22

February 2020

Unheard: the voices of part-time adult learners
John Butcher

Higher Education Policy Institute

HEPI Report 124

February 2020

What affects student wellbeing?
Professor Tim Blackman, Vice-Chancellor of The Open University

HEPI Policy Note 21 — February 2020

February 2020

Making Universities Matter:

How higher education can help to heal a divided Britain

Natalie Day, Chris Husbands and Bob Kerslake

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HEPI Report 125

March 2020

Getting on:
graduate employment and its influence on UK higher education

Rachel Hewitt
With a Foreword by Bob Gilworth

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HEPI Report 126

March 2020

From T to R revisited:
Cross-subsidies from teaching to research after Augar and the 2.4% R&D target

Nick Hillman
With a Foreword by Professor Robert Van de Noort

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HEPI Report 127

March 2020

After demand driven funding in Australia:

Competing models for distributing student places to universities, courses and students

Andrew Norton
With a Foreword by Nick Hillman and an Afterword by Alec Cameron

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HEPI Report 128

April 2020

hepi **Policy Briefing**
Developments in higher education policy and practice • April 2020

Covid-19

Due to the Covid-19 crisis, we have had to cancel our events programme for the late spring and summer. In line with Government advice, we also have closed our office temporarily. In favour of home working. However, we are continuing to work at full pelt on our written output, including our reports, our daily blog and our future programme of work.

Many of our daily blogs are now focusing on the impact of Covid-19 on the higher education sector. These are all available at www.hepi.ac.uk and anyone can join HEPI's electronic database to receive them by email – look for the sign-up box at the bottom of the HEPI homepage.

Policy Briefing Papers are prepared three times a year and are aimed at providing a summary of important recent events and reports for the benefit of higher education staff, governors and other interested parties.

Budget 2020

On 11 March 2020, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak, delivered the new Government's first Budget, which was dominated by its response to the Coronavirus pandemic. His speech referred to the importance of research and the commitment to make the UK one of the scientific and research centres of the world. He announced a series of measures, including a significant increase in research and development (R&D) investment, in support of this objective. The Budget Red Book refers to the UK's long and rich history as a hub for scientific and transformative technological progress and points to the fact that UK researchers are cutting carbon emissions, curing genetic diseases and pushing the frontier of artificial intelligence.

The Chancellor announced he was increasing investment in R&D to £22 billion a year by 2024/25, exceeding the election manifesto commitment to double spending to £18 billion by the same year. He said it was 'the fastest and largest increase in R&D spend ever. By 2024/25 R&D spending will represent 0.8 per cent of GDP, which will be the highest in nearly 40 years – higher than the US, China, France and Japan'. The increase represents a major step towards the Government's target of increasing total public and private R&D investment to 2.4 per cent of GDP by 2027. It will support world-leading research across the UK, meet the major challenges facing

society, including climate change and an ageing population, and provide funding for 'moonshot' scientific missions. The Government will invest in its own strategic science capability and back businesses to invest and innovate.

To reach the 2.4 per cent goal by 2027 (or possibly earlier), the private sector will need to increase its R&D spending from £26 billion to £44 billion. The
Continued on p2

April 2020

One for all or all four one?

Does the UK still have a single higher education sector?

Nick Hillman

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HEPI Report 129

April 2020

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Open for business?
Students' views on entering the labour market

Rachel Hewitt, HEPI Director of Policy and Advocacy

JOBTEASER

HEPI Policy Note 22 — April 2020

Foreword

By Jonathan Black, Director of Oxford University Careers Service

Students graduating this year could, perhaps, be forgiven for thinking they have lived against a backdrop of uncertain and threatening events: the 9/11 terrorist attacks and subsequent wars, the 2008 financial crisis, the turmoil and division of Brexit, and throughout the period, an increasingly obvious climate crisis. Now, along comes a global pandemic that is beginning to make the previous environment look almost benign and limited.

This HEPI report confirms that students' familiarity with uncertainty is measurable by the fact that the majority of respondents say their perceptions haven't changed solely because of the Covid-19 pandemic. They remain generally positive about their future – perhaps the optimism of youth who either don't know or don't believe the predictions or maybe they see opportunities in the changes to come.

Two in three respondents have a specific career in mind, and over 70% of them chose it because it relates to their degree. Coupling this with the data that show at least half believe stability is part of a successful career, implies the students have quite a fixed set of plans and what constitutes success.

This report forms a useful benchmark of how much the pandemic is changing students' views of their career. The extent, scale, and life of this pandemic and its accompanying economic shock are only just emerging, and there could be a very long way to go before we return to a 'new normal'.

It will be interesting to review, in a few months' time, whether and by how much, these fixed plans have had to change. Students had already noted a drop in the number of vacancies and internships being advertised, and we can all predict that many popular industry sectors for graduate recruitment could see dramatic changes. Tourism, entertainment, and retail industries are already closed down, while health and social care, food production, distribution, and IT are already rising.

One day, we may come to see this useful report as a coming from a prelapsarian age of detachment and innocence – asking the same questions in the summer and the autumn will be fascinating and instructive.

April 2020 — 1

April 2020

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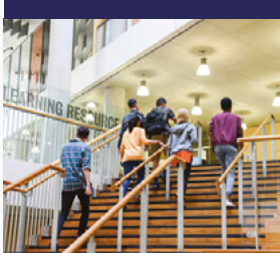Pressure Vessels II: An update on mental health among higher education staff in the UK

Dr Liz Morrish, Visiting Fellow at York St John University, and Professor Nicky Priaulx, Professor of Law, School of Law and Politics at Cardiff University

HEPI Policy Note 23 — April 2020

Summary

- Analysis of 17 universities reveals a continued rise in staff access to counselling and occupational health referrals since *Pressure Vessels* was published in 2019.

- From 2016 to 2018, there was an increase of 16% in counselling at the 14 universities for which comparable time series data were obtained.

- Over the same period of time, there was a rise of 19% in occupational health referrals at the 16 universities for which comparable time series data were obtained.

- From 2009/10 to the end of 2017/18, at twelve universities reporting complete data, there was a rise of 172% in staff access to counselling.

- At all 17 universities, there has been a rise in staff access to counselling of 155% in recent years. The highest increases were at the University of Bath (500%), De Montfort (325%) and Keele University (203%).

- At the 16 universities with data for 2009 to 2018, occupational health referrals rose by 170%. The largest occupational health referral increases were at Kent (500%), De Montfort (382%) and Bristol (374%), although there was a fall of 75% at Bath.

- For counselling and occupational health, the figures reflect gender differentiation, with women more highly represented.

- There is also a pattern corresponding to contract type: for occupational health data, we find the largest proportion of individuals being referred are professional services staff.

- While greater use of support services may sometimes reflect improved access, the analysis provides strong support for our claims about the declining mental health of university staff.

April 2020 — 1

May 2020

HEPI Analytical Report 1 — hepi — hepi.ac.uk
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Postgraduate
Education in the UK

Ginevra House

June 2020

Student Academic
Experience Survey
2020

AdvanceHE
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Jonathan Neves (Advance HE)
and Rachel Hewitt (HEPI)

STUDENT ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE SURVEY
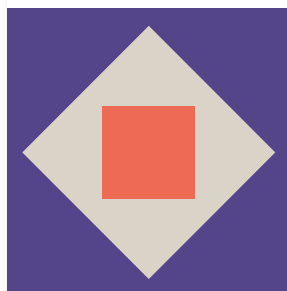
June 2020

PhD Life:
The UK student experience

Bethan Cornell

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HEPI Report 131
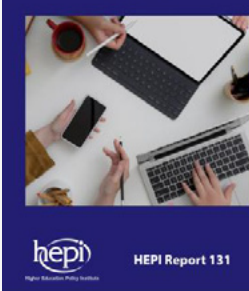
June 2020

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Students' views on the impact of Coronavirus on their higher education experience

Rachel Hewitt, HEPI Director of Policy and Advocacy

HEPI Policy Note 24 — June 2020

Key findings

- One-in-five students (19%) say they have had 'very clear' communications on Covid-19 from their higher education institutions (down from 31% in March).

- Two-thirds of students feel positive about the communications, three times higher than the proportion who feel negative – 66% say the communications are 'very clear' or 'quite clear' against 21% who say they are 'quite unclear' or 'very unclear'.

- Nearly half of students feel they have received clear communications about the next academic year from their higher education institution – 10% say the communications about next year have been 'very clear' and 33% 'quite clear'.

- The majority of students are satisfied with the way their higher education institution has handled their remaining assessments for this academic year – 20% say they are 'very satisfied' and 45% say they are 'quite satisfied'.

- Fewer students are satisfied with the online learning that has replaced face-to-face teaching than they were in March – 42% are either 'very satisfied' or 'quite satisfied', compared to 49% in March.

- Just under half say they are satisfied with the delivery of support services, such as careers support and mental health support, during lockdown – 13% are 'very satisfied' and 33% are 'quite satisfied'.

- Just over half of students (52%) are living away from their usual term-time residence and nearly a third (30%) of all students say they have received a refund on accommodation costs or early release from a contract.

- There is a clear hierarchy of expectations among students on the measures that institutions are exploring for the next academic year: 75% expect increased hygiene; 71% expect some learning online and 71% expect social distancing measures but only 26% expect limitations to courses, 25% expect a delayed start to term and 18% expect all learning to be online.

June 2020 — 1

July 2020

UK Universities and China

Edited by Michael Natzler

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HEPI Report 132

July 2020

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PhD students and their careers

Bethan Cornell
Intern at HEPI and PhD student at King's College London

HEPI Policy Note 25 — July 2020

Key findings

- Most PhD students (88%) believe their doctorate will positively impact their career prospects.

- PhD students are almost equally more (33%) and less (32%) likely to pursue a research career after they started than PhD than before, with the majority stating academic (67%) research or research within industry (64%) as a probable career path.

- The most commonly given reason for PhD students wanting to stay in academia is greater interest in their subject of study (40%).

- Reasons for wanting to leave academia vary – the most commonly cited reason is a lack of work-life balance (20%).

- PhD students are more confident their degree is preparing them for an academic research career (87%) than one straddling both academia and industry (67%), or a non-research career (33%).

- They feel well trained in analytical (83%), data (82%) and technical (71%) skills, along with presenting to specialist audiences (81%) and writing for peer reviewed journals (64%).

- They are less confident of their training in managing people (26%), finding career satisfaction (36%), applying for funding (22%) and managing budgets (11%).

- When considering future careers, PhD students are more likely to do their own research (64%) or attend careers workshops (76%) and networking events (60%) than to discuss options with an institutional careers consultant (13%).

July 2020 — 1

July 2020

hepi **Policy Briefing**
Developments in higher education policy and practice • July 2020

This briefing for HEPI's University Partners considers the latest policy developments in the sector including: an analysis of the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on university finances, undergraduate education and international student recruitment, plus the findings from HEPI's major annual survey of the student academic experience produced in partnership with Advance HE and recent HEPI research on postgraduate education.

Student Academic Experience Survey 2020

[body text columns]

July 2020

Miseducation: decolonising curricula, culture and pedagogy in UK universities

Mia Liyanage

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Debate Paper 23