

CIPD

*Championing better
work and working lives*

Fulfilling our Potential: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice

Submission to the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD)

January 2016



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Background

The CIPD is the professional body for HR and people development. The not-for-profit organisation champions better work and working lives and has been setting the benchmark for excellence in people and organisation development for more than 100 years. It has 140,000 members across the world, provides thought leadership through independent research on the world of work, and offers professional training and accreditation for those working in HR and learning and development.

Our membership base is wide, with 60% of our members working in private sector services and manufacturing, 33% working in the public sector and 7% in the not-for-profit sector. In addition, 76% of the FTSE 100 companies have CIPD members at director level.

Public policy at the CIPD draws on our extensive research and thought leadership, practical advice and guidance, along with the experience and expertise of our diverse membership, to inform and shape debate, government policy and legislation for the benefit of employees and employers, to improve best practice in the workplace, to promote high standards of work and to represent the interests of our members at the highest level.

General comments

The CIPD fully supports the Government's '*Fulfilling our potential*' consultation with its intention to raise the standard of teaching in higher education and improve student outcomes and learning gains. The consultation document rightly notes in its foreword some of the challenges facing the UK economy, including the issue of skills surplus and mismatch in certain areas. This skills mismatch undermines attempts to improve the UK's productivity. The OECD (*Future of productivity 2015*) finds that the UK has a higher level of skills mismatch than average and that reducing mismatch to "best practice" level would improve our productivity by about 5%.

Recent CIPD research [*Over-qualification and skills mismatch in the graduate labour market \(2015\)*](#) suggests that there is a growing problem of graduate-over-qualification in the UK, with nearly 6 in ten graduates in non-graduate jobs – a high proportion by international comparisons.

Analysis by the Edge Foundation of Higher Education Statistics Agency Destination of Leavers survey data published in Autumn 2015 finds that after accounting for non-working graduates, around half of all 2011 graduates failed to get a graduate-level job within three and a half years of completing their degree.

Research by IPPR (Winning the Global Race, 2014) finds that about a fifth of all low-skilled workers have a higher education qualification and that the increasing prevalence of graduates in non-graduate roles was having a bumping down effect, disadvantaging non-graduates in the labour market.

Employers report that graduate over-qualification undermines job satisfaction, motivation and staff retention and CIPD believes it represents an inefficient use of public and private (by individuals) funding of higher education at a time when other parts of the education funding system, notably further education, are under considerable pressure.

To combat this the Government is right to highlight the importance of ensuring higher education institutions focus much more on ensuring students are equipped with the transferable work-readiness skills that businesses need. Underpinning changes to improve learning gains and student outcomes in the jobs market has to be better data, and the consultation is right to focus on this.

The full scope of this consultation document lies beyond the CIPD interest and expertise however there are two questions where the institute does have a view.

Our response

Question 10: Do you agree with the focus on teaching quality, learning environment, student outcomes and learning gain.

Yes. CIPD agrees that the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) should reward and encourage teaching practices that are effective in developing students' knowledge, skills and – crucially – career readiness.

A key issue is the need to embed the teaching of employability skills as an integrated part of the TEF. The CIPD agrees with the conclusions of the HEPI paper *Employability: degrees of value* (2015) that “Students need to be supported to be more aware of – and enthusiastic about – the need to develop their employability. Students must be inspired to engage with the issue as early as possible because: “like steering an ocean liner, a small intervention early on is far more effective than frantic efforts at the last minute”. The CIPD also strongly agrees with the paper's conclusion that the development of an agreed employability framework is critical to give Higher Education (HE) providers and individuals an agreed definition and understanding about the ‘soft’ employability skills that students should be developing alongside their academic learning.

CIPD believes the learning environment should not just be about supporting the development of academic knowledge, but should also provide opportunities for students to build understanding of how the skills and knowledge they are developing might be transferable to the workplace. The learning environment is not just shaped by the university/college campus, but also extra-curricular activities including volunteering, work experience and employment either part-time or during holidays. The learning environment should include a strong focus on creating opportunities for employer engagement via work placements, internships and employer visits. Just as importantly, high quality career advice and guidance needs to be available to all students so they start thinking early on during their studies about how the knowledge and skills they are learning will lead to a fulfilling career once they graduate and the steps they need to take to ensure this happens, for example in terms of volunteering or internships.

Question 11: Do you agree with the proposed approach to the evidence used to make TEF assessments – common metrics derived from the national databases supported by evidence from the provider?

The CIPD believes there needs to be a review of the *Destination of Leavers from Higher Education* survey including which occupations are classified as ‘graduate level’, because it is currently potentially misleading to people considering investing in higher education.

For example, recent data from the DLHE was used by the Government to conclude that ‘only 20% of recent graduates did not find a graduate level job within 3 years of leaving college.’ However, analysis of the same data by the Edge Foundation shows that after accounting for non-working graduates, around half of all 2011 graduates failed to get a graduate-level job within three and a half years of completing their degree. And this is an average figure: for people with arts, humanities and social science degrees, the situation is significantly worse. In addition many of these ‘graduate level’ jobs (such as fitness instructor, estate agent, police constable and dispensing optician) in the official statistics can be accessed by people without degrees, who have vocational qualifications or who have worked their way up via an apprenticeship.

Changes to the Student Satisfaction Survey could also provide insight into the extent HE providers are providing support to build students’ employability and the quality of career information advice and guidance provided. The CIPD believes there should be two key questions one asking students about how the HE provider has facilitated employer engagement and one asking about how they rate the quality of career advice and



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guidance. The type of data would provide much better signalling to students over which HE providers are taking a meaningful interest in improving student outcomes.

Finally, the CIPD believes that the quality of reviews of HE providers provided by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education should be significantly improved, particularly in the level of detail they provide on assessments of the quality of careers advice and guidance available and the extent to which there is a meaningful focus on building employability and work-readiness.

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