The All-Party Parliamentary
University Group

7 March 2017

Agenda

The subject of the meeting of the All-Party Parliamentary University Group is Social Mobility: How can employers and universities work together to improve graduate outcomes.

6pm	**Lord Norton of Louth,** Co-Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary University Group, welcome and introductions.
c6.10pm	**Shirley Atkinson,** Vice-Chancellor, University of Sunderland
c6.20pm	**Nicholas Miller,** Director, The Bridge Group
c6.30pm	Questions, comments, and discussion with university leaders, MPs and Peers.
7.30pm	Speaker meeting concludes.

Speaker biographies

Shirley Atkinson

Shirley has responsibility for the executive management and oversight of the University, including preparation and delivery of its Strategic Plan.

She is currently a board member of the City of Sunderland College, a founding trustee and Director of the South West Durham University Technical College, a member of Universities UK International Policy Advisory Group, and Innovation and Growth Policy Network, a Director of the Sunderland Business Group, a member of the City of Sunderland Economic Leadership Board and Chair of the Education Leadership Board, and a Director of five university trading companies including the London Campus operation and companies in Malaysia and Hong Kong. Shirley is also an Executive Board member of Million Plus and a member of the Social Mobility Working Group (led by Universities UK), and a Board member of Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA).

Before joining the University sector in 2008, Shirley worked in public, commercial and not for profit organisations at Board and Executive level. She is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (qualifying with honours in 1989), for whom she has delivered over 200 lectures, chaired a number of conferences, and previously held a position on their examinations board. She also holds an MSc in Finance, is an alumnus of Harvard Business Schools' Global Leaders Programme and is a Fellow of the RSA.

Nicholas Miller

Nik is director of the Bridge Group, a leading national charity that researches and promotes social mobility. Prior to his appointment he worked in the USA, at the University of Warwick, and was most recently Head of Corporate and Alumni Relations at the University of York. Alongside his directorship, he is also frequently employed across sectors as an independent consultant. He has advised the Cabinet Office on social mobility, and collaborated with multinational organisations to promote fairer

access to the professions, including Google and Goldman Sachs. He has also recently worked with KPMG, Oxford University, the Wellcome Trust, the BBC, and the Barcelona School of Management.

Nik is an experienced fundraiser, and has secured millions of pounds from charities, businesses, and major philanthropists to support social mobility; he has spoken at international conferences and is regularly commissioned to write for leading publications. Recent publications include a national policy report on internationalisation in education, chapters in a book on global higher education, and a report on social mobility commissioned by the Head of the Civil Service.

He is a Fellow and Research Associate at the University of York, a Fellow of the Royal Society of the Arts, a member of the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) Research Committee, and a trustee of the Unite Foundation (disbursing over £8m to care leavers entering higher education). He completed his MBA (London) in 2009 with distinction, and continued at the Cranfield School of Management as a full scholarship recipient.

Briefing - Social Mobility: How can employers and universities work together to improve graduate outcomes.

Prepared for members of the All-Party Parliamentary University Group

Overview

The higher education sector does not operate in isolation. Universities admit students whose qualifications – and expectations – are shaped by many people and organisations, most obviously for younger students by their experiences and attainment at school. Students may also have had their experience shaped by a further education college or alternative provider, and many will have been supported by a charity in accessing higher education. When students graduate, decisions about whom to employ, into what role and on what career pathway, will be determined in large part by employers.

The Social Mobility Advisory Group's report published in October 2016, highlighted the critical role of employers for improving social mobility, given the mass of evidence which points to socio-economic background still being the most important factor in determining a graduate's career – often irrespective of the university attended. There is a need to enhance collaborative activity between the higher education sector and employers, particularly with small and medium enterprises, with more needing to be done to improve the inclusivity of recruitment practices, including the monitoring and publication of recruitment data, especially from underrepresented groups, and sharing effective practice and interventions.

Charities and the third sector

There are many charities working either exclusively or in part to address social mobility in higher education, seeing higher education as one of the best levers available to address wider social disadvantage. The charitable or 'third' sector acts as a broker to support universities in widening access and in linking universities with employers at the other end of the student lifecycle.

Many charities have a regional focus, with a number working in London and the South-East. Sometimes these organisations are associated with particular groups of universities, and can focus on addressing social mobility in a particular professional area, for instance supporting disadvantaged or BME graduates into professional careers. As such, these organisations have a critical role to play in supporting the delivery of the priorities. There is currently no directory or list of all educational charities. Knowing what these are, where they are located and their reach is important in supporting a more coordinated approach between charities, schools, colleges and universities. This information will also be useful to those engaged with HEFCE's National Collaborative

Outreach Programme (NCOPs) in exploring whether more could be done to link charities with NCOPs. This will help efforts to raise attainment to be scaled up in 'cold spots' in conjunction with the NCOP funding bids.

Alongside charitable sector activities, there are some innovative initiatives looking at how outcomes-based commissioning can support social mobility, particularly on a regional basis. The impact that these initiatives can have deserves close consideration in the context of evaluating how central funds can be allocated most effectively.

Employers

Graduate outcomes are substantially influenced by student background. This is partly to do with 'push' factors: there is evidence that students from lower socio-economic groups are less likely to engage in opportunities outside of the curriculum that boost employability (for example, internships, extracurricular activities and opportunities to work / study abroad). However, there are also 'pull' factors associated with employers' practices that affect these data. This is problematic for universities because they cannot easily influence the decisions that employers make as to whom to recruit and at what salary. There is also evidence of a strong bias from certain employers to engage with and recruit from high tariff universities, which typically have a lower proportion of students from lower-socio-economic groups.

While universities have a responsibility to support the progression of students from under-represented groups, employers also have an important role to play, not least in ensuring that their practices do not risk undermining the efforts in the education sector. Collaborative working with universities will play an important role in enhancing social mobility. Indeed, many employers are now taking steps to ensure that their graduate recruitment policies are inclusive. This not only helps ensure that their graduate intake is more representative of the communities they serve; it also supports their own corporate social responsibility agendas.

The recent Bridge Group report, *Inspiring policy: graduate outcomes and social mobility*, describes how employers are beginning to adopt a more inclusive approach to candidates' applications, including removing specific UCAS tariff or A-level scores from their entry requirements, and by masking material during the recruitment process. However, it was also acknowledged that although some employers had begun to publish and monitor data on recruitment this was still limited. Progression in this area will require a common understanding of socio-economic backgrounds, and an approach is currently being developed by the Bridge Group in partnership with the Cabinet Office.

The use of screening criteria is perceived to be especially limiting to employers' efforts to support social mobility. The latest data, from the Association of Graduate Recruiters, reveals that around 40% of leading graduate employers still have a minimum UCAS tariff requirement, and a similar proportion require relevant work experience. Although these criteria may be useful to help sift through candidates in large-volume recruitment, we know from the data that candidates from lower socio-economic backgrounds may be less likely to achieve the higher grades at A-level (or equivalent qualifications) and may have less access to relevant work experience.

Recommendations from the Social Mobility Advisory Group

The Advisory Group found that employers were aware that in delivering recruitment events at an institution they were only able to reach self-selected students. Although this practice is to be encouraged, employers are keen to explore how these engagement opportunities could reach a wider range of students, including those from lower socio-economic groups, who may be less likely to opt into such events that are typically held in the evening or could be off campus. The Social Mobility Advisory Group supported a recommendation by the Bridge Group in its research into socio-economic diversity in the Fast Stream that employers should, where possible and desirable, engage academically with students, delivering workshops, case studies, and co-delivering seminars and lectures. This form of engagement would enable a more diverse audience to be reached and is likely to be more impactful in terms of encouraging students who may not have previously considered applying.

To support the sharing of good practice in recruitment the Group recommend that consideration is given to exploring how best to share the evidence on effective practice and evaluation of interventions and outcomes, potentially by linking into the newly proposed Evidence and Impact Exchange as well as options for benchmarking performance. This will require employers to take a more robust approach to monitoring candidates' socio-economic backgrounds and to ensuring evaluation and transparency in recruitment practices.

The Group also recommended better coordination of outreach activities between employers and between employers and universities. This could include the promotion of sector-specific collaboration models and career advice. This was highlighted in the employers' roundtable undertaken by the Group and could involve coordination of activities and coordination in terms of how to measure impact and evaluation. It could also include better feedback loops from graduate employers to higher education institutions about the employability skills of graduates from disadvantaged backgrounds, and where more support was needed, along with better coordination of careers advice between universities and employers. This feedback should include evidence

about where candidates are not successful in the selection process, such that specific interventions can be designed to address this. Consideration could also be given to supporting and promoting sector-specific collaborative models to deliver more effective outreach, for instance as with PRIME (for the legal profession) or Access Accountancy (for accountancy).

Given the significance of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the UK labour market as a destination for graduates, the Group recommended that Universities UK, working with employers and their representative bodies, should explore how universities can support SMEs and other employers through a regional approach to tackling disadvantage. This could include engaging with regional structures such as Local Enterprise Partnerships and City Deals, and the broader role universities play in their local communities.

There was interest from employers in exploring how they and universities could improve collaboration more broadly. To support this Universities UK through its work with its members and employers, will explore how to increase and enhance the links between employers and the curriculum and the student experience, through activities such as placements, internships and mentoring as well as new models of delivery and partnerships such as degree apprenticeships. This could build on the evidence of employability activities set out in access agreements and the evidence obtained from Universities UK's Skills Review, which will explore collaboration between universities and employers in more detail.
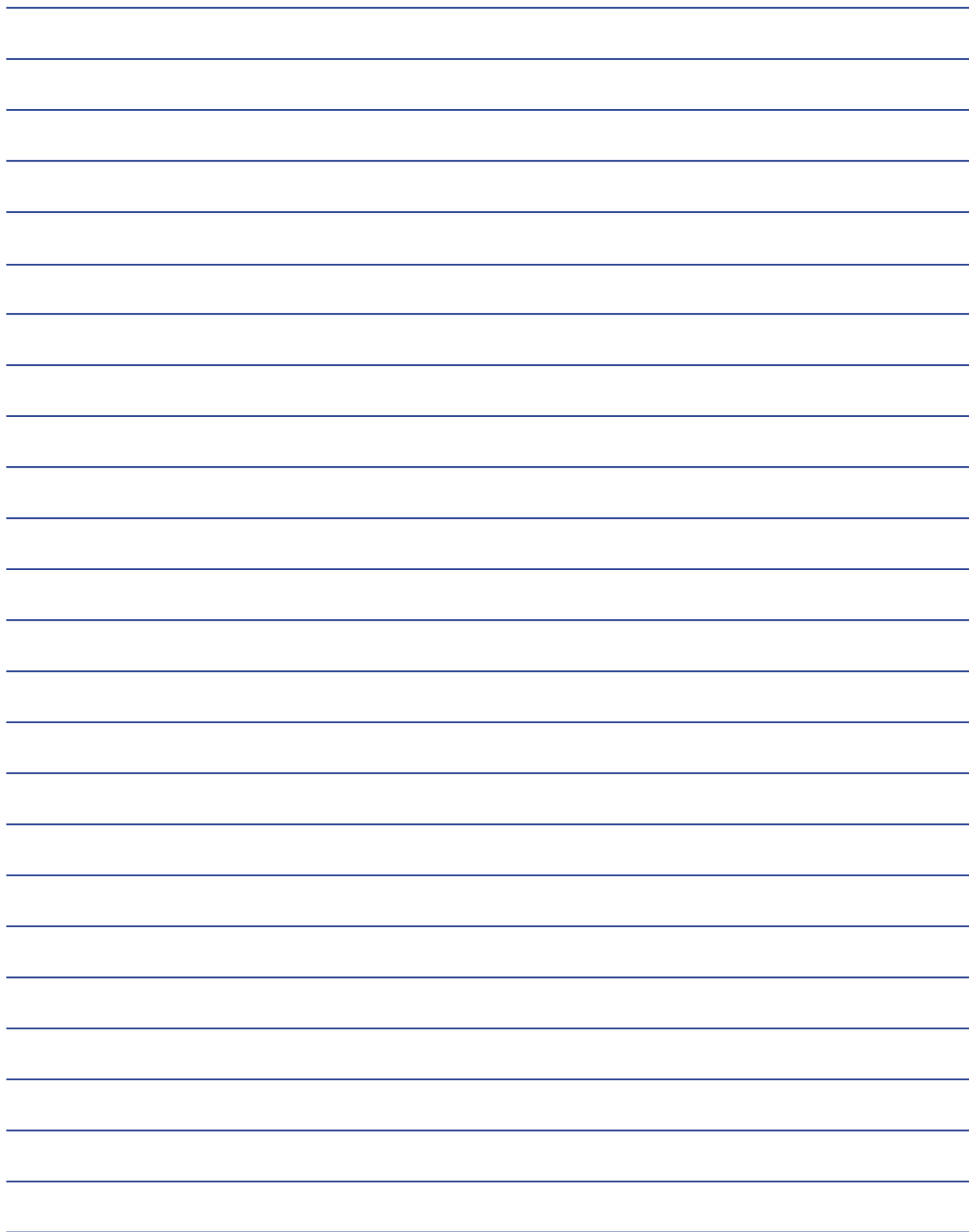
Future meetings

Wednesday 10 May 2017

Higher level skills

8.30-10am, Dining Room B

Tuesday 20 June 2017

Devolution

6-7.30pm, Committee Room 4, followed by dinner

For more information about the group please email appug@universitiesuk.ac.uk or visit www.universityappg.co.uk