



The All-Party Parliamentary
University Group

14 May 2019

Agenda

The subject of the meeting of the All-Party Parliamentary University Group is Higher Education and Further Education Pathways

- 8:30am** **Dr Roberta Blackman-Woods MP**, Chair, All-Party Parliamentary University Group
- c8:35am** **Professor Kathleen Armour**, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education), University of Birmingham
- c8:45am** **Paul Fairburn**, Director (Enterprise and Innovation), Coventry University
- c8:55am** **Stephen Fox**, Director of Higher Education, University Campus St Albans
- c9:05am** Questions, comments, and discussion with university leaders, MPs and peers
- 10:00am** Speaker meeting concludes.

Speaker Biographies

Professor Kathleen Armour

Kathy joined the University of Birmingham in 2010, became Head of the newly created School of Sport, Exercise and Rehabilitation Sciences in 2012, and was appointed as Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) in 2016. In this role Kathy is responsible for delivering the University's Strategic Plan for Education, overseeing all aspects of undergraduate and postgraduate education, she sits on the University's Executive Board and is Chair of the University Education Committee. Kathy is also academic lead for the Higher Education Futures institute (HEFi). This new institute has been designed to support the career-long development of our academic staff in learning and teaching, encourage innovation, and share good practice internally and externally.



Kathy trained and worked as a teacher in schools before moving into higher education. She gained a Master's degree from the Institute of Education in London in 1986, and a PhD in Education from the University of Southampton in 1993. In 1985, Kathy was appointed to Brunel University as a lecturer in teacher training. She moved to a senior lectureship in the School of Sport, Exercise and Health Sciences at Loughborough University in 1999, and gained her Chair in 2008.

Paul Fairburn

Paul was appointed to the role of Director, Enterprise and Innovation at Coventry University in January 2015 having previously held the post of Director of Business Development. Paul continues to develop partnerships between academics and companies in the public and private sector and is instrumental in helping external partners find the solution they need to complex business problems through research and development, consultancy and collaborative projects.



A chartered engineer by trade, Paul worked for a number of high profile organisations including British Gas, IVAX Pharmaceuticals UK (now TEVA UK Ltd), and the National Health Service before joining Coventry University in 2005 as part of the newly-formed Business Development (BD) Team.

Stephen Fox

Stephen has been Director of Higher Education at University Campus St Albans since December 2012. This is a joint venture between the University of Hertfordshire and Oaklands college which delivers a range of flexible and affordable degrees and professional courses, which are shaped to fit around the lives of people of all ages.



Prior to this Stephen worked at Buckinghamshire New University as Head of the School of Social Sciences, Education and Primary Care, and London Metropolitan University as Head of Social Work and Associate Head of Department of Applied Social Sciences.

He holds an MSc in Social Work from the University of Oxford and a Postgraduate Diploma in Advanced Social Work from the University of East London.

Briefing: Higher Education and Further Education Pathways

Prepared for members of the All-Party Parliamentary University Group

This is not an official publication of the House of Commons or the House of Lords. It has not been approved by either house or its committees. All-Party Parliamentary Groups are informal groups of members of both houses with a common interest in particular issues.

This briefing document has been produced by Universities UK which provides the secretariat for the University APPG.

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Introduction

This meeting of the All-Party Parliamentary University Group will explore the partnerships that have been formed between higher education and further education institutions.

There is growing and diverse collaboration between higher education institutions, further education colleges and employers. Partners are taking creative approaches to ensure that their collaborations are effective and that pathways and courses developed are industry-relevant, meet defined skills needs, provide coherent progression and flexible opportunities to engage in learning.

This guide will give further information about the different ways that tertiary education providers are collaborating to create innovative programmes of education, the opportunities that exist for further growth and the challenges that remain in place.

Context

The UK's world-class universities play a crucial role in training a workforce that needs to be highly skilled in order to meet the rapidly shifting needs of the country, in an ever-developing world. The sector is responding to the challenges that this presents by developing new models and approaches, including partnerships between higher education, further education, employers and other parts of the tertiary education system. The collaborations have a growing role to play in addressing the UK's skills challenges by providing integrated pathways to higher level skills for learners on vocational and technical, as well as traditional academic routes.

The important role that vocational and technical education will play in assuring the UK's future economic success is recognised in the latest Industrial Strategy. But while this strategy aims to "establish a technical education system that rivals the best in the world, to stand alongside our world-class higher education system" universities have approached this from a different angle. They have taken this challenge upon themselves and looked to fully integrate into any future technical education system by acting as providers for vocational programmes. University Alliance has said that this "vision of two systems, with its implication of two different student pathways and two different forms of engagement with industry and public services, is not only at odds with the current reality but, if reinforced, will hold Britain back."

Building on earlier recommendations of the Wolf Review, the Independent Panel on Technical Education chaired by Lord Sainsbury and The Richard Review of Apprenticeships suggested radical changes designed to simplify the system and deliver the skills most needed for the 21st century. These included re-defining

apprenticeship frameworks into a series of clear, industry-backed standards at Levels 2 to 8 and the development of 15 new technical routes to complement existing academic and vocational pathways, with clear progression to higher education. These recommendations were accepted by the government and their plans to cultivate progression routes to higher earning technical roles, while addressing the intermediate and higher skills needs of the economy, were set out in the Post-16 Skills Plan.

These reforms have had important implications for the higher education sector, during a time of great uncertainty and change. Recent developments have placed a far greater emphasis on competition and choice, as well as value for money for students and the tax payer. The introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy has further affected the sector, although as skills policy is a devolved matter the way funds raised are allocated differs between the nations of the UK.

While many of the individual innovations are very recent, the role and importance of partnership has been stressed for a significant period of time. In 2006 the Leitch Review of Skills advocated for closer partnerships between government, employers and individuals to facilitate the development of a more employer-led skills system. Business-university collaboration also provided the focus of the Wilson Review, which assumed that connecting universities' world-class research with an enterprising workforce in order to attract investment and turn knowledge into productivity would be crucial for the UK's future economic prosperity.

Although there is a perceived binary divide between the higher education and further education sectors, they have a tradition of working in partnership to deliver franchising arrangements and other joint activities such as collaborative outreach. These tend to be built upon pre-existing relationships between providers, with opportunities to form new relationships in some ways limited by the principle of competition and a lack of funding.

Many have seen the Post-18 Education and Funding Review as an opportunity to redress this balance. In February CBI Director-General Carolyn Fairbairn called on the Government to maintain England's university funding system, whilst in the same speech urged policymakers to end the political neglect and underfunding of England's further education system and support universities to offer shorter and more flexible courses to people later in life.

Universities UK has claimed that the review is a chance to create stronger pathways through technical education from greater local collaboration including by reviewing the barriers to increased local collaboration and creation of collaborative models

between universities, further education colleges and schools, and addressing these barriers.

Skills

The decline of traditional industries, such as coal mining and steel, has affected many areas of the UK, with the emergence of newer industries becoming ever more crucial for these regions. Advances in technology have had an impact on many sectors, such as the automotive industry, changing the way they operate as well as the products and services they produce and deliver. Ensuring employers have access to the skills they need to respond to these changes is imperative if businesses are to survive and the UK is to remain competitive in a global economy. Collaboration between higher education, further education and employers is an effective mechanism for first identifying and then addressing local skills needs.

Meeting future skills needs is a key driver for collaboration, as employers at the cutting edge of these developments are motivated to work in partnership with providers of technical and vocational education to ensure that the talent pipeline is equipped with the industry-relevant knowledge and skills they will need for the jobs of the future. In providing vocational and technical courses from Level 3 (and occasionally Level 2), colleges play a vital role in assuring the pipeline of new talent, supporting progression into the workforce and/or further study. The partnership between FE and HE ensures a coherent pathway for those who want to continue to learn beyond Level 4.

Universities and colleges have a significant role to play in helping businesses develop their workforce from within as well as the workforce of the future. The increased political focus on the apprenticeship agenda, and particularly the introduction of the apprenticeship levy and ambitious targets for the number of apprenticeships created, has encouraged employers to consider how they might use apprenticeships alongside traditional part-time study and short courses to upskill their current workforce.

A key motivation for employers to invest in upskilling their employees is staff retention, as it is more cost-effective than recruitment, and by investing in training, employees can be upskilled in a way that meets the needs of the particular company. A benefit of the partnership model is that employers are able to access training for staff at all levels, with clear progression routes for those seeking to advance in their roles.

Those seeking to upskill in the workplace have very different needs to young entrants to education. Their ability to engage in learning is likely to be constrained by a number of factors, including family or caring responsibilities and shift patterns. A key strength of the collaborative approach is that learning can be delivered in flexible ways that facilitate access for learners, irrespective of their circumstances.

Middlesex University Centre for Apprenticeships and Skills

Middlesex University's degree apprenticeship provision grew out of the University's pre-existing partnership with global sales training organisation Consalia, to meet employers' increased demand for apprenticeships with the introduction of the apprenticeship levy. A B2B sales professional degree apprenticeship, with students from Royal Mail and BT, and a construction professional degree apprenticeship have been followed by work to develop digital, senior leader and creative industries degree apprenticeships.

Middlesex's strategic partnership with Capital City College Group, which comprises three big London FE colleges, aligns FE and HE apprenticeship offers so learners can advance seamlessly from one level to another along a progression pathway. The partnership with CCCG increased the number of students the University could work with to 40,000 across both institutions and enabled more learners from a broader range of backgrounds - a key objective of the government and of Middlesex's own mission to aid social mobility.

Key Drivers

Economic

One of the key drivers behind seeking the engagement of local employers is that it can help to ensure students are prepared for work when they graduate from higher level skills programmes. By contributing to the development of curricula employers can tailor what students learn to the needs of the local economy, but there are a variety of other ways employers can be engaged to develop the work-readiness of graduates.

Employers may be directly involved in the provision of training, by offering work experience to students on certain courses. Through their collaboration with employer partners, the University of Strathclyde Engineering Academy is able to offer paid

summer internships, workshops on employability skills such as CV writing, and presentations about different careers in industry to help prepare students for a career in engineering. This sets the programme apart from traditional academic pathways to an engineering degree. As a result, graduates of the Academy are likely to have an advantage over graduates of traditional degree programmes.

Graduate outcomes have gained greater political attention recently, with a focus on what students are achieving once they have progressed from courses. Some are using this as a measure of the quality of providers and courses with new performance measures, such as the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), increasingly including graduate outcomes. Ensuring graduates are work-ready and possess the skills they need to progress into high-level employment is therefore a strategic priority for many institutions. Employer engagement and partnership working is one way for this to be achieved as it provides a clear pathway for students to advance into employment once they have finished studying.

Social

Widening participation is a key driver for higher education and further education partners to collaborate. This is in part due to providers wishing to charge higher fee levels having to set out how they will increase numbers and participation of disadvantaged and underrepresented students in an Access and Participation Plan that is approved by the Office for Students. Universities also often play an 'anchor role' in their local communities with civic responsibilities to improve their local cities and towns economically, socially and culturally.

Collaborations can help to strengthen the widening participation work that educational institutions do and ensure that they are engaging with as many potential learners as possible. Universities are increasingly working with colleges and other tertiary education providers to further their widening participation agenda. Colleges understand that they have a role to play in offering higher education courses to students who would not consider moving out of their local area to attend university. They also regularly offer courses at Level 4 and 5 which prepare learners for an undergraduate degree at a university

The social drivers of collaboration are not just about widening participation and access to university but relate more broadly to social mobility and the need for all students to achieve positive outcomes. Technical and vocational education can work for learners for whom a more academic route is less appealing. By collaborating with employers, both universities and colleges can strengthen this aspect of their curricula. Emphasising meaningful employer involvement can enhance the attractiveness of courses to students.

Policy Developments

The apprenticeship levy has undoubtedly created a motivator for education institutions to engage more closely with businesses and develop provision that could meet their needs, particularly the large levy-paying employers. Within this, degree apprenticeships are attractive to universities as a potential funding stream.

Since degree apprenticeships were launched in 2015, over 100 universities in England are now registered to deliver them. From very small numbers initially, there has been steady growth in areas such as leadership and management, digital technology and engineering, all areas with significant skills shortages across England. On top of meeting skills shortages in key sectors, degree apprenticeships help to improve productivity and support local economic growth. They also have significant potential to increase social mobility and diversify the talent pool, and where employers have used degree apprenticeships to achieve this, the initial results have been impressive.

Degree apprenticeships are a new form of provision and therefore there has been limited time to gather evidence that enables a sound assessment the impact they are having on increasing social mobility and productivity and closing the skills gaps across the country. Universities UK will be producing a report 'The Future of Degree Apprenticeships' in the coming months to further explore these areas and ensure degree apprenticeships are working in the interest of students, employers and local communities.

Current and potential future policy developments are particularly pertinent in some regions of the UK, such as Lincolnshire where a dominant agricultural industry is likely to be severely impacted on by the UK's exit from the European Union. While the impact of this on the local workforce is difficult to predict, technological changes in the agricultural industry are inevitable. Both education institutions and employers in the region are aware that the county needs to prepare for these changes, and that by working collaboratively they can ensure that their young people, and those who are already in the workplace, develop the skills needed to work in the industry as it evolves.

Lincolnshire Institute of Technology (LIT)

The University of Lincoln has led a collaborative bid with regional employers and all seven further education colleges in the county to establish an Institute in Lincolnshire which will specialise in agri-tech, food manufacturing, energy, digital and engineering. The bid is now nearing the final stages of approval.

Institutes of Technology are unique collaborations between employers, higher and further education providers. They will specialise in delivering higher-level technical skills which aim to help close skills gaps and improve productivity. The Government is backing the new institutes with £170million of capital funding.

With dedicated facilities proposed in Boston, Grantham, Grimsby, Holbeach, Lincoln, Scunthorpe and Riseholme, over three-quarters of the LIT courses will be brand new and will radically reduce the distance that learners have to travel.

It is anticipated that by its fifth year the LIT will be training over 1800 people per year, and its graduates will contribute £36.6m per year to the productivity of Greater Lincolnshire.

Additional Benefits

Most parts of the education sector have been subject to funding changes over recent years. While access to additional funding is not usually a major driver for collaboration, partnership working has resulted in financial benefits, particularly for educational providers. In addition to extra income generated from student fees, for some providers the partnership can help to facilitate access to new funding streams.

Universities can also benefit from new learners progressing through partnerships with local colleges. If students choose to continue in further education, colleges benefit by retaining vocational learners on their degree programmes, which are validated or co-designed with university partners.

In addition, working in collaboration provides those working in different parts of the education sector, as well as in industry, with a better understanding of what each other does and where their strengths lie. Staff within the partnerships have the opportunity to learn from each other, developing their knowledge and skills as well as new ways of working through, for example, being involved in industry-led teaching.

New opportunities can also arise as a result of strengthened educational collaborations. This is particularly relevant to pathway development, where colleges and universities are increasingly working together to meet intermediate and higher

level skills needs. A successful collaboration forged in one subject area may be replicated in other areas.

Challenges for Collaboration

One barrier to the formation of partnerships is the significant time input that successful collaboration requires. Time must be found in university leaders' already very stretched schedules for meetings with partners, exploring options for working more closely together and developing formal agreements and governance frameworks.

Similarly, partnerships may be hindered by the geographic region in which collaboration is taking place. It can be much easier for educational institutions to work together when they are operating in smaller spheres, whereas the sheer distance between providers in areas such as North Wales and Lincolnshire can make partnership working very difficult.

The diversity amongst partners can also create problems for collaboration, with higher education and further education institutions creating their own terminology for provision. It can be difficult to try to cut across this and ensure all involved are clear on the objectives and practices of the partnership. In addition, as more partners are involved there is a greater need to manage differing demands and expectations. It may also be the case that the partners are used to competing to attract students and therefore fear the effect of collaboration on intakes.



The All-Party Parliamentary **University Group**

Future meetings

Tuesday 25 June 2019

Post-18 Education and Funding Review
18:00-19:30, TBC

Wednesday 23 October 2019

TBC
18:00-19:30

Wednesday 4 December 2019

TBC
08:30-10:00

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