



**Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP**  
Secretary of State

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21<sup>st</sup> January 2021

To all MPs in England

Dear Colleague,

## **SKILLS FOR JOBS: LIFELONG LEARNING FOR OPPORTUNITY AND GROWTH**

I have today published our White Paper, Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth, which sets out our reforms to technical education and skills. It will make sure people can get the education and training they need to get great jobs, and employers can fill the skills gaps they currently face, boosting our productivity and improving our international competitiveness. Alongside this I have published the Interim Conclusion of the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding which sets out how our post-18 reforms respond to some of the key recommendations of the report of the independent panel led by Dr Philip Augar.

I have also published The Independent Review of the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) Report by Dame Shirley Pearce, and the Government Response which sets out how the TEF should play an important role in driving improvements in higher education provision and supporting excellent outcomes for students.

A Post-Qualification Admissions Reform consultation to seek views on whether to change the current system of higher education admissions and move to a system of post-qualification admissions has also been launched.

The UK economy faces significant change over the next decade: addressing the impact of an unprecedented global pandemic, delivering on new opportunities outside the EU, and adapting to the changes created by big data and other technological advances. We know that 52% of the workforce do not have essential digital skills for work and that demand for them will only increase. Education and skills are crucial to our response to these changes and we are making bold investments and reforms to build a high quality, unified system. This will play a huge part in ensuring that we build back better with a world-leading skills system.

### **Putting employers at the heart of the system**

Building on the success of our flagship apprenticeships programme, our reforms will put employers at the heart of the skills system so education and training meets their needs. By 2030, almost all technical courses will be based on employer-led standards, ensuring that the education and training people receive are directly linked to the skills needed for jobs.

We want there to be greater strategic planning of skills provision in local areas and we think local employers, working closely with providers, are best placed to lead this process. We will introduce Local Skills Improvement Plans, starting in 2021 in trailblazer local areas with business representative organisations, such as local chambers of commerce, in the lead, to ensure employers' skills needs are being met. We will also launch a strategic development fund to support the changes to local provision required to help providers meet the priority local skills needs that employers identify.

## **Lifetime Skills Guarantee**

Our reforms will underpin the Prime Minister's Lifetime Skills Guarantee, which he announced on 29<sup>th</sup> September last year, and will set out how this government will enable people to train and retrain throughout their lives.

This includes a lifelong loan entitlement to the equivalent of four years of post-18 education, to be introduced from 2025. We will first consult on its design and, in 2021/22, provide funding to stimulate the provision of flexible and modular learning. It also includes flexible, 12-16-week bootcamp training courses, and a free A Level equivalent (level 3) course for all adults without an existing qualification at that level.

## **Investing in high-quality technical education**

Despite the benefits of technical education, this country still has fewer people qualified to higher technical levels than many competitors, and we plan to address this by expanding on our existing reforms to increase the number of people studying high-quality technical education. We will rollout T Levels so that 24 courses are offered by 2023, giving the option of a high-quality, advanced technical equivalent to A Levels. T Levels will support a pipeline of young people with the technical skills to progress into areas such as green energy and advanced manufacturing, meeting the rapidly changing needs of the labour market. We have made £135 million capital available to support T Level providers delivering in September 2022, bringing the total capital funding committed to support T Levels to over a quarter of a billion. We will also continue to expand our Institutes of Technology to cover the country; these collaborations between employers, FE colleges and universities will offer world-class STEM training and education. We are investing £1.5 billion to upgrade further education colleges so students have access to high quality buildings and facilities and following an initial £200 million investment in September 2020, and I am pleased to launch the next phase of the FE Capital Transformation Fund today.

Alongside this, our qualifications review will remove low-quality advanced level and higher technical level courses and prioritise those aligned to employer-led standards, and we will continue to offer education and training for those who are further away from the labour market and need additional support, including learners with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

## **Reforming funding and accountability**

We want to support colleges and other providers to deliver these reforms, so we will consult on how to reform funding and accountability, working with the sector to develop a system that empowers and enables providers to deliver high-quality skills.

## **Supporting excellent teaching in further education**

Finally, these reforms cannot succeed without outstanding teaching. We will recruit and retain excellent staff, through a national recruitment campaign and improved training and development – including an opportunity for teachers to gain valuable industry experience on our Industry Exchange programme.

## **Interim conclusion of the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding**

Our Interim Conclusion of the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding responds to some of the key recommendations of the report of the independent panel led by Dr Philip Augar. A full conclusion of the review will sit alongside the next Comprehensive Spending Review.

As part of the interim conclusion, we will outline plans to help ensure that, through the higher education Teaching Grant, taxpayers' money is used to support higher education provision which aligns closely with the priorities of the nation. Our proposed reforms will mean that more of this funding supports priority subjects such as STEM, healthcare, and subjects meeting other key labour market needs. We want to ensure that our small and specialist providers, including some of our top music and arts providers, receive additional support, and that grant funding is used to effectively support students. We also want the Office for Students (OfS) to make additional funding available for student hardship, and to provide mental health support for students, with a focus on the transition to university. We propose to move the Higher Education Teaching Capital fund from a formula allocation to a bidding process designed around criteria relating to the Government's key strategic priorities. The Uni Connect outreach programme has successfully established numerous regional partnerships - we want to continue to invest to maintain this infrastructure, while moving the programme to a more sustainable funding settlement'.

We will issue a statutory guidance letter to the OfS setting out the detail of our proposed reforms, on which OfS will then launch a consultation ahead of implementation for the 21/22 academic year. And this spring we plan to consult on further reforms to the higher education system, including minimum entry requirements to higher education institutions, the treatment of foundation years and other matters, before setting out a full response to the report and final conclusion to the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding alongside the next Comprehensive Spending Review.

## **Ensuring university admissions work for students from all backgrounds**

We are consulting on whether to reform the university admissions system and introduce a system of post-qualification admissions. Our government manifesto committed to "improve the [higher education] application and offer system" and in a way that is "underpinned by a commitment to fairness, quality of learning and teaching, and access". The government will therefore consult with universities, colleges, schools, students, the Devolved Administrations, and other interested parties to develop a potential model of reform over the coming months.

We will work across the sectors to explore options for a more efficient and transparent system that helps all students, especially those who are disadvantaged, access the course and institution that best suits their aspirations and capabilities.

## **Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework**

We have also published Dame Shirley Pearce's Independent Review of TEF and the government's response. The government supports the majority of the review's 10 high-level recommendations. I want the OfS to develop a revised and improved provider-level TEF that plays a key role in the wider quality regime, aligning with other measures and incentivising continuous improvement in higher education providers to ensure that all students benefit from high-quality provision. In line with the government's commitment to permanently reduce bureaucratic burden, I am clear that the TEF should not include any form of subject-level assessments at this time. I expect the OfS to consult on the new TEF framework in due course and would like assessments completed and published by September 2022.

## **Clear and trusted information for careers and education choices**

Clear and outcomes-focused careers information is fundamental to the success of our reforms. We need impartial, lifelong careers advice and guidance available to people when they need it, regardless of age, circumstance, or background. We will improve both local and national alignment between The Careers & Enterprise Company and the National Careers Service to create a clear, all-age careers system. We have appointed Professor Sir John Holman to advise on this alignment, as Independent Strategic Adviser on Careers Guidance, working closely with The Careers & Enterprise Company and the National Careers Service.

Taken together, our reforms will transform the whole skills system and make it more flexible, building back better from the coronavirus pandemic, creating opportunities for individuals, and enabling this country to compete internationally with the best. Through these reforms, supported by high-quality careers advice, information and guidance, this government will ensure that everyone will be able to get the skills and training they need to get great jobs at all stages of their lives and wherever they live, and will have the means to lead a fulfilling and productive life. Links to all referenced publications can be found in the annex.



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## **Annex A**

Skills for Jobs White Paper

[Skills for jobs: lifelong learning for opportunity and growth - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/white-papers/skills-for-jobs)

Interim Conclusion of the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding

[Post-18 education and funding review: interim conclusion - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/interim-conclusion-of-the-review-of-post-18-education-and-funding)

Post-Qualification Admissions Reform consultation

[Post-qualification admissions in higher education: proposed changes - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/post-qualification-admissions-in-higher-education)

The Independent Review of the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework Report by Dame Shirley Pearce, and the Government Response

[Independent review of TEF: report - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/independent-review-of-teaching-excellence-and-student-outcomes-framework-report)

[Independent review of TEF: call for views - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/independent-review-of-teaching-excellence-and-student-outcomes-framework-report)

[Government response to the independent review of TEF - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/government-response-to-the-independent-review-of-teaching-excellence-and-student-outcomes-framework-report)

Guidance to the Office for Students – Allocation of the Higher Education Teaching Grant funding in the 2021-22 Financial Year

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/a3814453-4c28-404a-bf76-490183867d9a/rt-hon-gavin-williamson-cbe-mp-t-grant-ofs-chair-smb.pdf>

FE Capital Transformation Fund guidance

[Further Education Capital Transformation Fund - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/fe-capital-transformation-fund)