

Management Matters



The newsletter of AMHEC

January 2011

Universities urged to 'adapt swiftly' to cuts

Following the passing of the Commons vote on tuition fees, Universities UK President Professor Steve Smith announced that institutions will need to be both flexible and efficient to adapt to the new system in order to deliver a world-class higher education experience.

"No one takes any pleasure in asking graduates to take on more debt," he said. "But the cuts to the higher education budget are a reality and we must make sure that our universities are properly funded to deliver the high standards that students rightly demand, without cutting back on places."

The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) wrote to University Vice Chancellors and Principals back in May 2010 emphasising the need for HEIs to 'adapt swiftly' to the constraints in public finance and think carefully about what they do and how they operate which will undoubtedly require strong leadership.

With this in mind, AMHEC's workshop 'Agility in Demanding Times' held at Edge Hill University in September examined the necessity for institutions and managers within them to respond to the changing external climate needs.

Leading sessions included 'A Passing Storm or Permanent Climate Change?'

led by PA Consulting; 'Making an Institution Agile – Why and How?' by John Cater, Vice Chancellor of Edge Hill University and 'HEFCE Funding, Roles and Relationships' by Ian Lewis, Head of Finance at HEFCE. Workshops provided an invaluable forum for AMHEC manager's from a variety of disciplines to come together and highlight common issues, encouraging wide ranging debate and discussions.

For details of AMHEC's Annual Conference 'Engaging for Excellence' on 13-14 April 2011 at University of Chester see back page.

Perspectives on Tuition Fees: How will AMHEC institutions compete?

A senior government backbencher clarified that his opposition to the Government's proposals on tuition fees were threefold: "The manifesto promise not to introduce top-up fees was clear-cut; the level of debt faced by poor students is too high; the proposition as currently framed will introduce a market into higher education, which I think is fundamentally wrong."

No, not a worried Lib Dem under pressure from students who turned out in droves to vote for his party in the General Election. Not even a Lib Dem, not even this Parliament. This was Nick Brown, ex-Chief Whip in the last Labour Government and a close ally of Gordon Brown, speaking in 2003 at the height of the backbench rebellion that only just failed and variable fees were introduced with a Government majority of four. Plus ca change, deja vu and a few other choice

Anglo Saxon words come to mind as well.

Some really did believe in 2003/4 that there would be a market, that institutions such as AMHEC's would never be able to recruit students at £3,000, that widening participation was dead, numbers would plummet and the world would come to an end.

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Tensions rise as student protests spread across the country

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Founded in 1960, The Association promotes a forum for Managers in Higher Education to share information and solutions across a diverse range of issues. The Association currently comprises 20 member institutions and over 140 individual members.



Challenging times for the ‘oven ready’ graduate

Steve Harris, Senior Lecturer in Management Studies at Newman University College, explores the critical role neo-liberal thinking has played in contributing to rising graduate unemployment figures.

Higher education has been placed at the centre of UK economic policy. This is a course of action that advocates the UK needs to maintain the provision, year on year, of employable graduates who are equipped with ‘higher level skills’, ‘oven ready’ for employment.

These graduates are required to meet the demand for jobs in the knowledge economy and ensure the UK can continue to compete against global competition. However, recent estimates from the Higher Education Careers Services Unit (HECSU) indicate that graduate unemployment is increasing and could rise from 10 to 20% due in part to cuts in public sector spending.

What exactly has gone wrong?

This article expounds that it is the neo-liberal character of government policy, which is directly responsible for the rise in graduate unemployment. This neo-liberal slant to UK political strategy has been continually pursued by successive governments ever since Margaret Thatcher came to power in 1979.

Neo-liberals assert firstly, that the market can be positively regulated by state intervention to optimise its conditions, and secondly that state control through public sector management can be ‘evil’ and should be reduced and opened up to free



market competition. This in turn naturally allows greater individual liberty and freedom, whilst promoting enterprise and innovation at local level, which neo-liberals argue cannot happen under central state control. Neo-liberals viewed the construction of large council estates, financed by the public purse, as a source of social unrest, rather than a cure.

Despite advocating greater individual liberty and freedom, the neo-liberal character is by its own assertions market-driven and anti-collectivist. Thus, since the 1980's there has been a significant shift away from government investment in UK manufacturing. State money instead has been diverted into financial markets, as it was viewed this strategy would yield higher financial returns.

So how is the neo-liberal character of policy responsible for rising graduate unemployment?

Economists point to the de-regulation of UK and USA financial markets in the 1980s as the catalyst that triggered the 2008 financial crisis. This in turn has resulted in the current coalition government's priority of focusing on the reduction of public expenditure. It is this with the associated economic cautiousness amongst companies that has caused graduate unemployment to rise.

What more can universities do to support graduates in these difficult times?

Much has been written about employability and the need to equip graduates with 'high level skills'. These are seen as key to help graduates secure employment in a continually increasing competitive market. However, agreement over what exactly constitutes a 'high level skill' is divided and appears situationally dependant on the profession or employer. Government discourse on graduate employability focuses on terms such as training, skills and competencies and seemingly ignores the word 'education'. The use of such language potentially promotes a focus on competency assessment, rather than a criticality of enquiry, which neglects the importance cognitive

activity plays in stimulating creativity, innovation and enterprise which in essence are precisely the skills coalition government consider vital to help rebuild the UK economy.

Unlike Russell Group universities, post-1992 universities tend to have to rely on adhering to the government's employability agenda to secure the majority of their funding. Such universities are facing a challenge under the current climate. Research indicates that students entering university value the need to be 'oven ready' and place greater value on employability and personal wealth than 'knowledge for knowledge's sake'.

Whilst the number of students currently applying for university outstrips the number of places available, this could start to change with the introduction of higher tuition fees and the perception that there are no longer the graduate job opportunities available once they leave university. Individual university employment rates are likely to come under greater scrutiny from potential students. Therefore it is vital universities put strategies in place to maintain and enhance current employability rates.

One such innovation is the over-subscribed PgCert programme at the University of Worcester, which in partnership with Graduate Advantage, places students in a business four days a week and then encourages critical enquiry through a series of work-related projects.

In these challenging times it is increasingly important that a focus on competency does not replace a focus on education. Failure to do so will ill-equip graduates faced with uncertainty and placed in a world of work that favours short-term contracts over a longer term commitment.

In the words of Professor R S Peters, one of the most respected philosophers of education writing in Britain today:

"To be educated is not to have arrived at a destination; it is to travel with a different view."



Liverpool Hope University

One of the newest universities in the country with an educational tradition stretching back more than 165 years.

A brief history

The University's founding colleges were the Church of England S. Katharine's (est 1844) and the Roman Catholic Notre Dame (est 1856), both teacher education colleges for women. A second Roman Catholic teaching college, Christ's College, admitted its first students in 1965.

In 1980 these three joined in an ecumenical federation before creating a single, unified, ecumenical college, Liverpool Hope, in 1995. Liverpool Hope University College gained taught degree awarding powers in 2002, became a University in 2005, and in 2009, was granted Research Degree Awarding Powers (RDAP). These unique roots make Liverpool Hope Europe's only fully ecumenical University.

Two Campuses

Hope is a community which prides itself on knowing each of its students by name and not just as a number. The University is based primarily in two campuses: Hope Park is a mini educational village situated in a pleasant Liverpool suburb just four miles from the city centre. Students live in halls, both on and off campus.

The Creative Campus, near the city centre, is home to the University's creative and performing arts subjects. With the spectacular Angel Field Renaissance Garden at its heart, the primary buildings are The Cornerstone, a beautifully refurbished Victorian school and the brand new Capstone Building which opened in 2010. The Music Department is one of only two University-based all-Steinway schools in the UK.



Student Centred

Hope's Student Support & Well-being team is responsible for everything that directly influences student learning and the personal care of students. The priority is to make the transition to higher education as easy as possible and to make students' experience of Hope both friendly and enjoyable.

The University defines itself as a 'teaching-led, research-informed institution' where all professors take part in undergraduate teaching. Over 91% of students who began their studies at Hope in 2007 completed their degrees in 2010, far exceeding the University's benchmarking target of 85% set by the Higher Education Statistical Agency.

An International University

Hope has staff from 34 different countries and students from 75, including the United States, Nigeria, China and Bangladesh. Students are given the chance to study abroad, as well as undertaking overseas work as part of the Service and Leadership Award, via the University's Global Hope charity. In 2010, eleven Global Hope projects took place in seven countries on three continents.

Graduates success

Liverpool Hope's students are achieving greater success than ever. In 2010, 67% of final year students were awarded a 1st or 2:1 degree. Over 90% of Hope graduates go on to work or further study within six months of graduating. The University offers substantial scholarships for graduates to undertake further study at Liverpool Hope.

Research focus

In the short space of seven years, Hope has established its research work to attain 'world leading' or 'internationally excellent' status in seven disciplines.

The 2008 Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) assessed work in Theology, Divinity and Religious Studies and Social Work and Social Policy and Administration as showing "Quality that is world-leading in terms of originality, significance and rigour." A number of submissions in the fields of Computer Science and Informatics, Psychology, Education, English Language and Literature and Music were assessed as being "...internationally excellent in terms of originality, significance and rigour."

Research at Hope takes place across the range of disciplines – in humanities, sciences and social sciences, education, liberal arts, business and computer sciences.

Business and community support

Liverpool Hope Business Gateway is the single point of entry for all business-related enquiries to the University. Its remit is to help regional businesses to improve their bottom-line performance. The Business Gateway also offers services to academics, students and graduates who are interested in developing enterprise activities. In 2010 the University launched a partnership with O2 and the National Council for Graduate Entrepreneurship to offer three Hope graduates key support for their business initiatives.

Investing in the future

Liverpool Hope has invested over £20 million pounds in infrastructure in the past year. September 2010 saw the launch of the new £8.5m Eden (Education and Enterprise) Centre, with 20 new classrooms and new learning and social areas, as well as international conference facilities and business incubation space. Earlier in 2010, the £7.5 million Capstone project was completed at The Creative Campus, housing the University's Centre for Music Performance and Innovation, as well as the spectacular Hope Theatre.



www.hope.ac.uk

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In reality the numbers of students from poorer families soared, although only in proportion to the overall growth on numbers, everybody now charges the maximum fee, the money flowed in, SSRs came down and glitzy new buildings sprang up across our campuses. These last six years may well turn out to have been a golden age.

So, is it different this time round? Yes and No. Yes, because additional fee income will replace not add to state funding unless

fees in excess of £6k+ for Band D and £7k+ plus for Band C are charged; there will be some variability in fees charged, between institutions and between subjects. No, because there will be no great change in the social mix in students; the numbers of students going to university will not fall as a proportion of the 18-30 age group (which is due to fall by 17% over the next decade), perhaps not at all.

But will AMHEC institutions be able to compete in a market? Absolutely. We have a great brand. Get the student experience right and the price correct and we will

thrive. Perhaps the biggest danger is HEIs higher up the food chain slashing their entry requirements. But anyone charging less than £6k in 2012 will be getting it wrong. Cheap will still be seen as nasty and any substantial reduction in the unit of resource will affect the student experience. For those reasons, £7-9k will become the norm.

On the other hand...

Tommy Geddes
Deputy Vice Chancellor
University of Winchester
(In a personal capacity)

Welcome Boost for AMHEC Benchmarking

The AMHEC Benchmarking project has received a £128,000 grant from HEFCE to assist in developing and enhancing the project. This injection of funding also enables the project to operate with a low subscription rate for AMHEC institutions.

Among these enhancements is the upgrading of the database software to include UK Audit Agencies Value Indicators for:

- Finance
- Human Resources
- Estates
- Information Technology
- Procurement

These indicators are widely used across other parts of the public sector and HEFCE have identified that the AMHEC

Benchmarking project can play a lead role in developing these more widely across the HE sector.

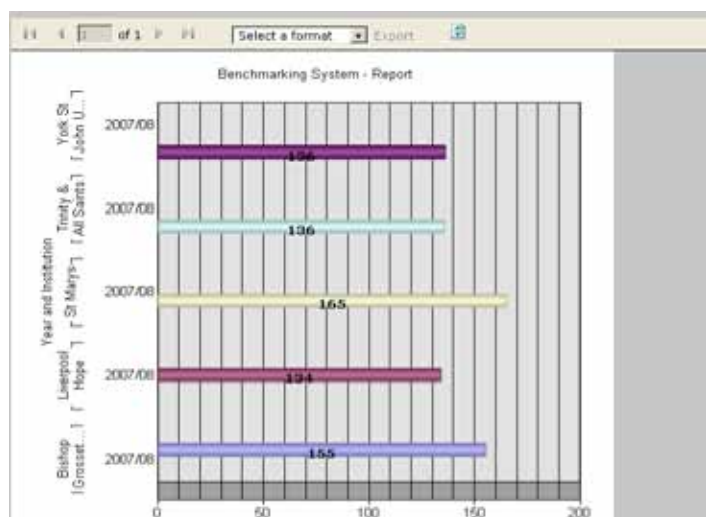
The project will continue to provide members with a range of benchmarking workshops which they can attend throughout the year which look to identify and benchmark good practice. These include Human Resources, Budget Management, Corporate Planning, Graduation Events, Income Generation, Fundraising and Alumni. The workshops have provided a constant source of 'quick wins' for delegates attending which produce cost savings and process improvements.

In addition the project database allows benchmarking reports to be produced which compare the cost of activities between AMHEC member institutions.

This is becoming increasingly necessary given the recent announcements about public sector and HE funding. Renewed interest in benchmarking has resulted in St Mary's University College, Belfast recently joining the project and other AMHEC institutions have received demonstrations of the software.

Over the next 12 months the project will be setting up a website dedicated to benchmarking activities in the HE sector and also encouraging more universities and colleges to use the benchmarking software developed for the project.

If you are interested in benchmarking and want to know more about what membership of the project offers please contact Andrew Young
ayoung@aspectmanagement.co.uk





One Step Closer: HEFCE funding for Shared Legal Services

As many of you will know AMHEC recently undertook a study on behalf of HEFCE to look at the possibility of procuring legal services on a shared basis. This was part of the sector wide Shared Services Initiative designed to look at cost effective approaches to procuring services on a shared basis.

Following the production of a final report and outline business case by AMHEC and JISC Legal (part of JISC Advance), HEFCE has now agreed to provide £290,000 towards the creation of a shared legal service. The service will be operated by JISC Legal who already provides legal information services to the HE/FE sector. The funding provided by HEFCE will allow JISC Legal to appoint professional legal staff to deliver 'in-house' type legal services to AMHEC/GUILDHE institutions to an agreed, appropriate Service Level.

These services will include:

- Researching up to eight areas of law per year (including legislation, cases etc) as agreed with AMHEC.

- Dealing with up to 300 enquiries per year from institutions referring them to a legal panel (of law firms) as appropriate. (Similar enquiries will be 'bundled' together and if they wish, two or more universities/colleges can submit an enquiry as a group).
- Producing FAQ's where appropriate from these requests and the guidance given back.
- Producing appropriate news items, up to five a month, plus other updates as appropriate.
- Producing appropriate short guidance documents, up to six per year, though other media may be used, such as web casts.

The final feasibility report concluded that institutions would receive the benefits of 'in house' legal services at a fraction of the cost of appointing their own university solicitor.

In addition, the JISC Legal Service will facilitate the creation of a Legal Panel which will lead to reduced legal fees for

AMHEC members. It is estimated this will provide cumulative savings on legal fees over a five year period of at least £900K (this is a conservative estimate). It is expected that institutions' will save more than they pay out in their subscription.

Institutions subscribing to the service will still have the option to procure legal services outside of this framework.

The service is expected to start operating during the current academic year. Provisionally AMHEC institutions who sign up as founder members will not be required to pay a subscription for the services in the first year and it is hoped that many members sign up for the new service and take full advantage of its benefits.

For more information relating to this new shared legal service please contact: Andrew Young
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Vice Chancellor YSJU inaugurated

The new Vice Chancellor of York St John University, Professor David Fleming, was inaugurated at a formal ceremony held in York Minster on Tuesday 2 November, which included musical performances, symbolic gift giving and concluded with dramatic African drumming accompanying the procession leaving the Minster.

In his inaugural speech David said: "This has been a fantastic event for York St John University students, staff and friends. We all have a lot of pride in York St John and I feel enormously privileged to be a part of it. I believe that this is a remarkable university in the heart of a remarkable city. The event marks the start of an ambitious period which will establish York St John as a leading, internationally recognised, teaching led university."

David joined York St John University in June and has quickly built on the firm foundations the University holds in York and the wider region. His recent appointment to the Board of Directors at Science City York demonstrates his support in developing a thriving knowledge economy in York and his timely appointment to the UCAS board will allow him to help shape the higher education admissions agenda at a time of extensive change in the sector.



Vice Chancellor of York St John University Professor David Fleming, The Most Reverend and Right Honourable Dr John Sentamu, Pro Chancellor of York St John University Robin Hall

AMHEC Annual Conference:

Engaging for Excellence

Wednesday, 13 and 14 APRIL 2011

Against an uncertain and very challenging political and economic climate, increasing competition and heightened expectations from our students, never has there been a greater need for HEIs to secure a fully engaged workforce.

Committed and positive employees that connect with the mission and values of our institutions are key to our resilience and to ensuring that higher education thrives through the challenging years ahead.

Yet, how good are we at developing and delivering employee engagement strategies? From effective communication to providing healthy and productive physical working environments, this conference will explore not only the changing dynamic of HE, but the role that all managers and leaders must play to secure a dedicated workforce that will ensure institutional success through budget cuts and post Browne.

The conference will be held at the University of Chester on 13 and 14 April. Speakers are still being confirmed and a full programme will be published in the next few months.

Book now and take advantage of the Early Bird Discount of £275. Bookings made after January 2011 will be charged £295. Day rated are available.

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