



Universities and schools working together: the national picture

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Summary

Three areas of discussion:

1. The National Council for Educational Excellence (NCEE)
2. The Higher Education recommendations
3. Key Challenges



NCEE

The role of the Council:

- Established by the Prime Minister in 2007
- Tasked with developing a world-class education system in England
- Schools, parents, industry, higher education and the voluntary sector working together
- Provide advice to DCSF and DIUS



The Higher Education Strand

- Working with key stakeholders
- Sutton Trust research project - why disadvantaged young people do not progress to HE
- UUK Report - an overview of current HE-schools engagement
- Partnerships have been developing for many years in a sustained way



Recommendation 1

- It is important that schools and colleges offer the fullest possible support and advice to students with the ability to enter higher education, including appropriate advice for those with the ability to apply for the most selective institutions. Our recommendation on IAG will go some way to address this issue. In addition we believe the Government should consider asking Ofsted to make the quality of this support an explicit and published part of the inspection process. We also believe Government should consider what information could usefully be made available to schools and colleges to enable them to benchmark their performance with others.



Recommendation 2

- Every primary school should devote time to work on raising student aspirations to take up a place in higher education. Schools and HEIs should try to ensure that every pupil visits a higher education campus either during primary or early secondary education, concentrating initially on schools in low participation or deprived areas.



Recommendation 3

- Government should ensure that primary, secondary schools and colleges are enabled to provide better STEM (particularly maths) skills to pupils to ensure that take-up of STEM courses at a higher level is not constrained by lack of capacity or inappropriate IAG. Schools should continue to develop dedicated activities to promote participation in STEM subjects and modern foreign languages and HEI links with schools and colleges should support this.



Recommendation 4

- Significant improvements are needed in the information, advice and guidance (IAG) provided in secondary schools:
 - Schools and colleges to appoint staff with associated responsibility
 - HEIs to ensure timely IAG to young people and teachers
 - Encouraging ambition and improve advice on 14-19 choices
 - Government to promote better IAG
 - National publicity campaign



Recommendation 5

- Building on the speech by the Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills on 8 April 2008, all HEIs should produce for HEFCE comprehensive strategies for their widening participation work. HEIs should support schools, including arrangements for improving school performance in the light of the National Challenge, and be involved with supporting Academies, Trusts or other mechanisms for working with schools. HEIs should consider how best to balance their investments in widening participation and ensuring fair access according to their specific institutional missions. OFFA should acknowledge the full range of contributions made by HEIs in support of widening participation, particularly in relation to IAG, curriculum support/enrichment, student mentors, involvement with Trusts and Academies, and Governor engagement.



Recommendation 6

- HEIs should continue to use, and where possible expand the range of, all the information available to them to identify the best students with the greatest potential and ability to reach the highest academic achievement. In the interests of openness and fairness, institutions should publish their admissions policies and make them easily accessible to applicants, and equip all those involved in admissions to implement the policy consistently.



Recommendation 7

- Government should look to establish base data on the predictability of the new A level and Diploma A* grade prior to predicted A* grades being used in the higher education applications and offers processes. We fully support the introduction of greater stretch and challenge within the A2 syllabus and in order to achieve an A* award, candidates will need to demonstrate much greater depth, breadth and understanding of the subject in their answers. We are concerned that there is no evidence yet upon which to assess whether the new A* grade can be predicted with accuracy. Government should collect and review data on predictability over the first few years of A* being awarded before it enters use in the HE applications process.



The Key Challenges Remaining

Three key challenges to be addressed:

- The use of contextual data
- Predictability and use of A* grades
- Quality IAG and the implementation of the School Report card for performance monitoring





Thank you for listening