**Higher Education in a Brexit World - Nicky Old UUK**

Political context - SLIDE (PM CARTOON)

The Prime Minister is weak, and dependent on DUP support -with that being a more challenging position every day.

Potential successors jockeying for position, she has survived attempts by her own party and parliamentary vote of no confidence. She clings on, but her days are numbered.

The ability of Government to move its policy agenda forward is constantly in question, especially given the deep splits in Cabinet, not least on Brexit. No parliamentary time for anything except Brexit. Civil service struggling to cope with demands placed upon them.

Corbyn-led Government cannot be ruled out but things are far from plain sailing for the leader of the opposition at the present time.

Country has had a series of major political events pretty much one a year since 2014. Scottish referendum (2014) general election (2015) EU referendum (2016) general election (2017)

This has led to political instability, impacted on politicians’ behaviours, the media and policy development.

As a sector which has to plan for the long term, these political events – alongside the Higher Education and Research Act 2017, a new regulator and greater public scrutiny than ever before – means that the list of challenges faced is substantial and depending on what happens by 29 March could be growing.

The sector is more important to the nation than ever before. Storms can be weathered with right planning.

**Three areas for discussion**

* Brexit and the importance of being a truly international sector
* The highly anticipated review of post-18 education funding in England
* And the regulatory environment in which we are operating, and students are studying

**Four areas of opportunity:**

* The role of universities in their nations and regions
* The global role of universities
* Enhancing the student experience
* And sharing more about what the sector does to benefit everyone – not just students and graduates.

**Info on Universities UK**

* Represent 136 universities in all 4 nations.
* Mission to create the conditions for UK universities to be the best in the world - maximiusing positive impact locally, nationally and globally.
* Work with members to develop policy, campaign for change and promote sector in the media and to opinion formers
* Work closely with Universities Scotland and Universities Wales
* Has directorate dedicated to international issues

**SLIDE 5 - Brexit.**

29 March is close (depending on when you are reading this) but still now clearer on situation.

We are preparing for what many commentators call the single biggest political event since the second world war. Brexit

Top priority for UUK since referendum result was known. They have been providing info to members, understanding concerns, listening to questions, representing these to government departments and taskforces, lobbying politicians.

Message received from government and European partners - British Universities have a vital role to play in creating a successful, dynamic and internationally competitive post-exit United Kingdom

UK universities are one of our country’s biggest success stories - for driving economic growth locally; improving productivity and strengthening international trade and diplomatic relationships across Europe and the wider world.

Colleagues in Universities UK are continuing to work with universities across the UK to understand the issues, the questions by students, staff, partners and identify areas where there is lack of information and clarity.

**Priorities for the next two months**

We have been working hard since June 2016 to ensure that the UK government and our European partners are very clear on UK universities’ priorities:

1. Ensuring the promises made on confirmation of settled status for EU nationals working at our universities are met through a smooth, simple and timely process
2. Securing an immigration system that enables students to enter the UK to study with minimal barriers, and universities to recruit talented staff with minimal bureaucracy.
3. Securing the UK's involvement in the next Erasmus+ programme from 2021.
4. Securing access to, and influence over, the Horizon Europe research and innovation programme (the successor to Horizon 2020).
5. Shaping the replacement for the European structural funding that has supported innovation, economic growth and university-business collaboration partnerships in many regions of the UK, and
6. Protecting mutual recognition of qualifications

Phase 1 of the Brexit negotiations concluded with much needed guarantees for our EU staff on rights to live and work in the UK and confirmation of participation in the Horizon 2020 EU research programme, and Erasmus+ mobility programme, until the end of 2020.

EU students and staff will be able to enter the UK with minimal barriers through the transition period. The transition settlement was relatively positive for universities.

Towards the end of last year we heard a lot of positive statements about universities, including in the Brexit White Paper with its welcome references to enhancing the UK’s attractiveness for research and facilitating mobility for students and young people, enabling them to benefit from our world-leading universities.

Clear intent from the UK government to protect universities from the challenges of Brexit and seek opportunities for close European collaboration beyond the date of exit.

In recent months we have been stepping up our no deal planning - not the outcome the sector wants.

Contingency planning and taking steps to engage across government to ensure they understand what actions would be needed to support universities in the event of a ‘no deal’ outcome or a deal which does not match up with universities’ priorities.

Bookmark UUK’s Brexit webpages

**SLIDE Augar**

2017 General Election saw an unprecedented 11 percentage point increase in voters aged 18-24, 62% of that cohort voted Labour. The Labour manifesto pledge to abolish university fees in England was widely credited with driving youth turnout in many seats.

Election results made clear that the Conservatives urgently need a more appealing offer for young people – review of post-18 education.

Review is focusing on the funding regime in England, we are acutely aware that its outcomes will have implications for institutions in the other nations of the UK.

Four challenges which Philip Augar and his panel have been tasked to consider:

**VfM and efficiency**

Argument that universities are inefficient and are not delivering value for money to students. There is a lack of understanding about how much it costs to support students through university - dividing the £9,250 fee by contact hours, not factoring in the facilities, IT, round-the clock library facilities, careers advice, health and wellbeing support, outreach and widening participation activities and many other things which universities are expected to provide.

Following the review, the government may choose to cut the headline fee in England, to force efficiencies.

Risk is that the positive trend of investing in the student experience may be reversed

**Rebalancing’ funding towards further education**

Further Education in England has suffered from huge funding cuts

Doesn't have to be a case of funding FE at the expense of HE, or vice versa.

Skills shortages lie most acutely at levels 4 and 5. But there is a danger that government overlooks the role of universities in delivering technical education, and instead directs funding – and forces certain students – into FE.

**Improving support for flexible, part-time learning to meet skills needs**

Universities UK has been working with the CBI to understand employers’ views of flexible learning.

Between 2010 and 2017, there was a drop of more than one third in the number of people studying part-time across the UK.

Survey of 'lost learners' – those who considered, but did not end up completing, a part-time higher education course from academic year 2010/11 onwards found:

* Just over half of lost learners were aged between 25-44 years of age and in full-time work. Around half held A-levels or lower as their highest qualification
* A lack of flexibility around life commitments and the need to work during study was one of the top reasons for lost learners not starting part-time higher education, and the most common reason for dropping out of study
* Other reasons included costs of tuition and living costs when studying on a part-time basis.

Decline can't be reversed whilediscussion about higher education focuses on the traditional route of school leavers heading off to study full-time at university for three or four years.

Evidence shows significant demand from learners and employers for more flexible learning, where learners combine study with work, and other life commitments.

If the UK is to succeed in future, with the challenges of Brexit, rapid technological advances and an ageing population, more people of all ages should be going to university to upskill, retrain and develop the higher-level skills employers need.

**Living costs**

One of the main concerns of students

Particularly impacts students from more disadvantaged backgrounds who don’t have the security of parental support to supplement loans or wages.

**SLIDE - What do universities want to see from the review?**

**five key tests for the review’s recommendations.**   
  
Quality and choice: All those qualified and who wish to enter higher education should be able to do so under a system that is fair, accessible and progressive.

Recognize the need for a sufficient supply of higher-level skills (4,5 and 6)

Stable and sustainable funding, with the cost shared between taxpayers and graduates. any gap in funding needs to be made up in new money, not existing pots raided

Sufficient support should be provided to cover both living and tuition costs.

The system should be easy to understand and transparent.

**So what happens next, and what can we expect?**

The panel had originally been expected to report in November, February is now the earliest when we are expecting the recommendations to be published.

Media speculation about the contents of the review, including:

* A cut to the headline fee (figures range from 6.5-7.5k)
* government making up the shortfall through a T-grant
* minimum entry tariff mechanism to limit students going straight into HE, channelling them to FE

**SLIDE (OfS etc)**

The new regulator for universities in England, not yet one year old, the Office for Students is now operational. Although primarily an English regulator, its impact is being felt across all four nations.

OfS a different beast to HEFCE

It is independent market regulator, this means in the past year we’ve seen the OfS intervene on issues including freedom of speech, mental health and vice-chancellor pay.

The focus is on students as consumers of a service, pursuing quality, value for money, and the right to complain or switch providers if the service does not meet their expectations.

We are also keeping a watching eye on the engagement of OfS with the devolved nations. Some policies with important UK-wide implications – such as quality and standards - have been pursued without an apparent full awareness or recognition of the statutory positions in place.

We are also working to shape and improve the Teaching Excellence Framework and consider how it can operate as a UK-wide exercise given the different national contexts.

TEF holds very little weight with students.

**Why should you go to university in 2019?**

**OPPORTUNITIES SECTION**

SLIDE

UK HE sector makes a substantial contribution to UK GDP, supports almost 950,000 jobs of all skill levels in the UK economy, generate over £14 billion worth of tax receipts for the government that can be reinvested into public services.

The UK industrial strategy provides opportunities to convince Government to introduce new policy or funding to support universities to drive economic growth.

Five key elements of the strategy: ideas, people, infrastructure, business environment and places, it’s clear that universities can play a leading role in delivering the objectives of the strategy.

But the regional role of universities goes far beyond the economic, the cultural role of universities is so important – museums, galleries, libraries, theatres, cinemas, sporting venues.

And regionally universities are investing heavily in initiatives to improve social mobility.

**International**

The UK is one of the most international higher education systems in the world. It is something that benefits our research, our students and our communities.

We are the second most popular destination in the world for international students, only beaten by the USA. And transnational education is growing.

20% of our students and 30% of our academic staff are international. 57 current world leaders were educated at UK universities.

Over half of UK research publications have an international co-author.

78% of UK students believe studying alongside international students prepares them for working in a global environment.

**SLIDE**

The fact is that globally the number of people looking to study at university is growing year-on-year. In terms of international student enrolments, countries such as USA, Australia, France and Germany all continue to grow at a faster rate than the UK with Australia managing growth of 10.7% and USA 9.4% in 2014-15. Over the same period, the UK's international enrolments grew by just 0.5%.

Without action we are at real risk of falling behind many other countries whose governments have introduced ambitious policies and targets.

**SLIDE**

Countries like Canada, Germany and Australia…..

There is cause for cautious optimism in immigration policy.

Universities UK is arguing for the following three outcomes:

* Improvements to post-study work visas to support skilled international students to live and work in the UK for up to two years following graduation, to make us more competitive in the international student market.
* Significant and sustained international campaign to encourage international students to choose the UK as their preferred study destination, counteracting the less than welcoming impression of recent years
* Improvements to Home Office processes so that students do not face bureaucratic barriers to securing a visa and to ensure there is a level playing field for all highly trusted sponsors of international students.

**SLIDE**

In recent years, UUK has engaged with challenging social issues that are inherent both to the student experience, and society in general.

And universities are investing more than ever before in support for students, particularly health and wellbeing, alongside more established areas such as careers advice,

Our framework on mental health supports universities to take a holistic approach to supporting mental health and wellbeing for students and for the whole university community. We are making progress in developing new resources to support universities in taking a whole institution and partnership-based approach and at the start of the academic year we published new guidance on preventing student suicide.

Our work on sexual harassment and hate crime has brought to light a host of issues that all kinds of institutions must deal with and started positive conversations about the role universities can play in tackling these serious social problems. And we’ll be releasing new guidance on cyber bullying this spring.

We are working with the NUS on efforts to tackle the BME attainment gap – the question of why gaps emerge between otherwise equally qualified groups of students, and the evidence base for what universities can do to address those gaps.

**SLIDE**

And we are continuing to look at what more can be done to encourage flexible learning, and to provide role models to show that there is no one-size-fits-all model of a university student. Katherine from Wales (slide) is a great example of why there should be opportunity for everyone.

**SLIDE**

Nearly half of the public surveyed – 48% - were positive about universities.

About a third were neutral, and fewer than 10% were negative.

Then we told them some high level information about what universities do to improve lives – not just of the students who study at universities, but the research and community projects which change people’s lives for the better whether they went to university or not.

Almost 9 out of 10 now were positive or neutral, and indeed we see a 13 percentage increase from neutral into positive.

**SLIDE**

This. That if you ask people ‘what does a university do’ the answer is pretty much ‘they teach 18 year olds’.

**SLIDE**

Most communications teams, and most vice-chancellors, are fairly confident that their local community knows what they do and sees their role as positive - but only a third of respondents held this view, and 40% said they didn’t know about this. But crucially they wanted to know more.

**SLIDE**

Research isn’t something the public spontaneously mentioned or associated with universities. Many couldn’t really articulate what research is, why it’s done, who does it or where it happens. It’s just a word, and abstract concept.

**SLIDE**

But overall, what the survey and focus groups led us to conclude is that people simply lacked the information and ammunition to be advocates for us. We were seen as a marginal issue, not something you’d actively bring up for a discussion in the pub.

**SLIDE**

70% think are universities are some of the best in the world, and a similar number say we will be important to the success of the UK meeting future challenges.

**SLIDE**

Public were actually positive about what might be classed as the softer benefits of universities, the love of learning, making friends, asserting your independence.

**SLIDE**

MadeAtUni campaign was born. Starting with universities nominating their biggest breakthrough – a piece of research, an initiative or development which would help the public understand more about what researchers, students and staff do to improve everyone’s lives.

**SLIDE**

Campaign launched in December, and more than 130 universities took part, and you can see their case studies and video content on our MadeAtUni website and social channels.

**SLIDE**

The aim was to reach people who weren’t natural advocates of universities, and that meant making what universities do relevant to people who aren’t students, graduates or university staff.

Stakeholder support has come from the CBI, Santander, London First, Alzheimer’s research, British Heart Foundation, England Rugby, World Rugby, the British Council, NHS Confederation, GREATBritain and others helping us to reach audiences outside of traditional higher education and research networks.

The stories on the list captured the imagination of the media with the launch generating over 250 items of print and broadcast media coverage, including national stories in the Guardian, Mail Online and interview slots on BBC Breakfast and Sky News.

Around 20 million people have been reached through organic (non-paid) social media, with the campaign trending twice on Twitter on launch day.

**END SLIDE**