

UCU response to Green Paper *Higher education: teaching excellence, social mobility and student choice*

Statement from UCU branches at University of Bristol and University of Bath

We endorse comments circulated to branches in the UCU briefing on the Green Paper (November 2015). However, we call on the HEC at its meeting on 13 January to make a clear statement of opposition to the Teaching Excellence Framework and the role it is intended to play in the further privatisation of higher education. With HEFCE teaching grant now reduced to 5% of total HE income, we call on the HEC to respond to the consultation by calling for an increase in public spending on university teaching as the only way to guarantee teaching excellence.

There have been no claims that QAA does not serve the purpose of maintaining standards, only the implication (Chapter 1 Para 5) that the costs of this system are too high and should be reduced. QAA sits alongside the existing arrangements for assessing teaching quality: the exam system. In that system, academics cross-check the assessment standards of their peers at other universities, which has turned out to be a good way of maintaining consistent standards throughout the university system. The proposed TEF, operating within a new architecture of regulation and quality assurance, would most likely be less rigorous and more costly than the existing arrangements. Furthermore, the additional costs will be borne by universities, thus transferring a further chunk of university income away from teaching and into administration. We welcome the UCU briefing's comments on the likely impact of the TEF on an increasingly casualised and overstretched HE workforce, but call for a clear recognition that the TEF, combined with further cuts to public spending on university teaching, will exacerbate these trends. Further, far from being the unintended consequences of policy whose aims we might share, the proposals in this Green Paper are intended to undermine the quality of teaching, and to make it easier for private providers to establish themselves, especially through the creation of low cost, cheap to provide courses. Our evidence for this is that the Green Paper proposes to remove even the weak regulations introduced by the Department of BIS in response to the critical report on private providers produced by the National Audit Office.

We call on HEC to condemn the proposals in the Green Paper unequivocally as an attack on the quality of university teaching and a charter for private universities to raid the student loan system for their own profit.

We further call on HEC to restate the case for increased public investment in university teaching, an end to tuition fees and increased student and staff representation on the governing bodies of universities.

