

Parliamentary mentions of ELQs since 07/09/07

Mentions highlighted

Commons Oral Questions

Jack - Open University Funding

Date: Thursday, 10 January 2008

Contents

10. Mr. Michael Jack (Fylde) (Con): If he will make a statement on his Department's proposals for funding for the Open university in 2008-09. [177257]

The Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills (Mr. John Denham): Funding for individual universities is for the Higher Education Funding Council to determine on the basis of the grant letter that we expect to issue in the near future. We have already announced that for higher education as a whole, there will be a funding increase of 2.5 per cent. in real terms in each of the next three years. The Government's priorities, including employer engagement, widening participation and more opportunities for mature learners who have so far missed out on higher education, will create excellent opportunities for the Open university over the coming years.

Mr. Jack: Notwithstanding his answer, the Secretary of State knows that his proposals for **equivalent or lower qualifications** will deprive the Open university of a stream of funding. I have read the report of the debate on this subject, but could he enlighten me as to where I can find the body of evidence that justifies the changes that he has proposed and that shows new students are being deprived by the current arrangements? When will there be proper consultation on a proposal that appears to have been introduced without any discussion with colleges such as Birkbeck, or with the Open university?

Mr. Denham: The evidence can be found in the Leitch report, which clearly described the need to increase the number of graduates in the work force by 2020. That means that people who would not otherwise have the chance to go to university can do so. The evidence is based on international comparisons—comparisons with what our major competitors are doing—and tells us where we need to be in terms of the skills of our work force in order to be able to compete internationally. Certainly there is evidence of the potential for that, as was mentioned earlier in respect of the number of people who are already qualified to level 3—those who have reached the normal level for entry to university, but have not had the chance to go there. The challenge—and

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I do not shy away from it—is to encourage higher education institutions to reach out to that group of students, and I believe that they will succeed in doing that.

Mackay - Higher education funding

Date: Thursday, 10 January 2008

Contents

3. Mr. Mark Harper (Forest of Dean) (Con): What assessment he has made of the effect that withdrawal of funding for **equivalent or lower qualifications** will have on lifelong learning. [177248]

7. Mr. Andrew Mackay (Bracknell) (Con): What assessment he has made of the effect that withdrawal of funding for **equivalent or lower qualifications** will have on lifelong learning. [177254]

The Minister for Lifelong Learning, Further and Higher Education (Bill Rammell): We are not cutting funding to higher education; in fact, funding has been and is increasing significantly. Our decision is the right one for lifelong learning. It directs funds to those who most need them and is a fairer way to spend public money. It is the best way of making progress towards the target that 40 per cent. of the working-age population should have a higher-level qualification.

Mr. Harper: I listened carefully to the Minister's answer and the Secretary of State's at the beginning. The Secretary of State referred to the full assessment that will be made as part of the review of higher education funding. Would it not be more sensible to delay the decision on the withdrawal of funding until that assessment had taken place? However persuasive Ministers were to their colleagues, they have not managed to persuade any of the institutions, including the university of Gloucestershire, which has written to me expressing great concern about the issue. If the

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Ministers' case was so sound, surely they would be able to use rational argument to persuade their colleagues in higher education?

Bill Rammell: I do not believe that there is a case for delay. Were we to delay, the alternative critique would be that we were not allowing institutions sufficient time to plan for the new system. Interestingly, as the Secretary of State said earlier, the Conservative party did not oppose our policy in our debates earlier this week. It offered principled opposition for just one year—until the 2009 commission. With respect, that is not really principled opposition, but opportunism.

Mr. Mackay: Notwithstanding the Secretary of State's characteristic good humour, we still do not know why the 63 Labour MPs who signed early-day motion 317 voted against an identical motion on Tuesday evening. Will the Minister explain? Does he agree that it adds to public cynicism?

Bill Rammell: I do not believe that that is the case at all. [Laughter.] Forgive me—perhaps it is not a surprise, but I do not agree with that. There was a request for reassurance that institutions will be able to cope with this pace of change, and we have set out very clearly, in detailed terms, the protections that will be available to enable them to do so. That is why people are being, and will be, reassured.

Harper - Funding for Lifelong Learning

Date: Thursday, 10 January 2008

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3. Mr. Mark Harper (Forest of Dean) (Con): What assessment he has made of the effect that withdrawal of funding for **equivalent or lower qualifications** will have on lifelong learning. [177248]

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Clark - Funding for Second Degrees

Date: Thursday, 10 January 2008

Contents

1. Ms Katy Clark (North Ayrshire and Arran) (Lab): What Government policy is on the provision of funding for those seeking to gain second degrees; and if he will make a statement. [177246]

The Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills (Mr. John Denham): We have asked the funding council to redeploy, by 2010-11, £100 million of the £329 million that currently goes to support students studying for **equivalent and lower qualifications**. This will provide an opportunity for some 20,000 full-time equivalent students to enter higher education for the first time or to progress to a higher level who would otherwise have been turned away.

Ms Clark: My right hon. Friend is aware that many of those seeking to obtain second degrees are women intending to return to work after taking time off to look after children, people who have lost employment and are seeking to retrain, or those who have a first degree that is not relevant to the employment that they need to acquire. Does he accept in principle that the Government should provide support to such groups?

Mr. Denham: My hon. Friend raises an important point. Although the Government have made clear their desire to reprioritise some of the funding to those who have never had the chance to go to university, we are also protecting for equivalent or lower qualification funding foundation degrees, which are a major route of vocational retraining, and a list of exempt, strategic and vulnerable subjects that are important to the economy and are, therefore, most likely to provide employment opportunities to a woman who is retraining. Even when the changes have been implemented, there will be many routes available to the women whom my hon. Friend describes who need to re-educate at a higher education level.

Hollobone - University of Northampton (funding)

Date: Thursday, 15 November 2007

Contents

Mr. Philip Hollobone (Kettering) (Con): Two months ago the Department announced that it would withdraw funding for students in higher education studying **equivalent level qualifications**. Will that not have a disproportionate impact on institutions such as the university of Northampton, which have been successful in attracting students from disadvantaged groups? Does it not go against all the principles that the Government espouse about people being able to retrain for better career opportunities?

Bill Rammell: I respect the hon. Gentleman's point of view, but I profoundly disagree with it. Spending public money to give people who already have a degree a second degree, while 70 per cent. of adults in the working age population do not have even their first degree, is not the right priority. One could argue that we should choose to focus more on those with existing qualifications and less on those without them. I would disagree with that proposition, but it is at least a coherent view. However, one cannot legitimately argue that the choice is not there to be made.

Commons Written Questions

Jackson, S - Higher education finance (lifelong learning in Peterborough)

Date: Tuesday, 15 January 2008

Analysis

The following question was answered on 15 January 2008.

Contents

Mr. Stewart Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills what assessment he has made of the effect on the lifelong learning of Peterborough residents of the reduction in funding for **equivalent or lower qualifications**. [178094]

Bill Rammell: No students currently studying **equivalent or lower qualifications** will be affected by these changes. In future, our policy of redistributing grant will widen participation and mean that, as elsewhere, more of the majority of Peterborough residents who do not have a first higher-level qualification, especially those from non-traditional backgrounds, will be able to benefit from participating in higher education.

Wilson, R - Science degrees

Date: Wednesday, 12 December 2007

Analysis

The following question was answered on 12 December 2007.

Contents

Mr. Rob Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills (1) what percentage of degrees awarded in science, technology, engineering or mathematics were awarded as equivalent or lower-level qualifications in the last 10 years; [171961]

(2) how many students in higher education studying for a science, technology, engineering or mathematics degree were pursuing equivalent or lower-level qualifications in the last 10 years. [171962]

Bill Rammell: The precise information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost. However, the following table sets out the number and proportion of students studying the major science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) subjects as **equivalent or lower level** qualifications (**ELO**) in 2005/06. Subject to consultation, we plan to continue to support vulnerable strategic subjects including STEM subjects studied as **ELOs**. The £100 million to be redistributed as a result of our **ELO** policy will also enable more students to study STEM subjects as first degrees than would otherwise be the case.

We have already announced that we will be spending an extra £75 million over three years to support relatively expensive STEM subjects.

Number and proportion of students studying major STEM subjects as **equivalent or lower qualifications**

Subject	ELO students	ELO students as percentage of total
Maths	590	4
Physics	180	2
Chemistry	140	2
Biology	340	3
General Engineering	320	5
Electronic Engineering	300	2
Mechanical Engineering	230	3

Willis - Higher Education

Date: Thursday, 06 December 2007

Analysis

The following question was answered on 06 December 2007.

Contents

Mr. Willis: To ask the Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills (1) what plans he has for provision of funding for students studying for an MSc in clinical oncology who have already gained a first degree; [170855]

(2) what plans he has for provision of funding for post-graduate students who wish to train for a Masters qualification in health care; [170856]

(3) what plans he has for provision of funding for post-graduate students with a Post Graduate Certificate of Education who wish to gain specialist qualifications to teach children with special educational needs and autism. [170857]

Bill Rammell [holding answer 3 December 2007]: We have asked HEFCE to redistribute institutional funding of about £100 million a year by 2010 away from students doing a second qualification at an **equivalent or lower level** to the one they already hold in order that we can support more of all ages more of an opportunity to participate in higher education for the first time. However, we have asked HEFCE to consult about the best way of implementing these changes, including whether any exceptions should be made for students in particular circumstances. The consultation ends on 7 December after which decisions will be taken about the detailed implementation of the policy.

Drew - Students: Finance

Date: Monday, 03 December 2007

Analysis

The following question was answered on 03 December 2007.

Contents

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills if he will make a statement on the Department's proposal to stop funding at Higher Education Funding Council for England level for students undertaking study for **equivalent or lower level** qualifications at the Open University; what impact assessment he has made of the decisions with particular reference to students from lower income backgrounds and part-time students; and what other funding sources are available to those people. [169609]

Bill Rammell: The Department took this decision which applies to every provider in order to target resources on our top priorities and the country's long-term needs. It will enable an additional 20,000 students without a first qualification whom we could not otherwise support to enjoy all the benefits of participating in higher education. Many of this group are likely to be part-time students from lower income backgrounds. The overall effect of these changes on the income of individual institutions will depend on how successful they are in attracting students who meet our 3 Dec 2007 : Column 754W priorities. No students currently studying for equivalent and lower level qualifications will be affected, no institution will lose grant in cash terms and future students studying for such qualifications will be able to look at what is on offer at over 250 providers. But they cannot be more deserving of public funding than those who have not obtained a first qualification. The Higher Education Funding Council are currently consulting the university sector on the detailed implementation of this policy.

Hayes - Student statistics (women)

Date: Monday, 19 November 2007

Analysis

The following question was answered on 19 November 2007.

Contents

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills what percentage of students studying for **equivalent or lower qualifications** at university are women. [162711]

Bill Rammell: Approximately 57 per cent. of students currently studying for **equivalent or lower qualifications** at university are women, which is broadly the same as the overall percentage of students who are women.

Hayes - Higher education (finance)

Date: Tuesday, 13 November 2007

Analysis

The following question was answered on 13 November 2007.

Contents

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills (1) what assessment he has made of the impact that the phasing out of funding for students

taking **equivalent or lower qualifications** at university from 2008-09 will have on the delivery of the objectives of the Leitch review of skills; [162627]

(2) what assessment he has made of the impact that phasing out funding for students taking **equivalent or lower qualifications** at university from 2008-09 will have on institutions with a high proportion of part-time and mature learners; [162712]

(3) which organisations were consulted prior to the decision being made to phase out funding for students taking **equivalent or lower qualifications** at university from 2008-09; and when each was consulted. [162714]

Bill Rammell: We are not cutting funding from higher education. We took this decision as part of the comprehensive spending review in order to target resources on our top priorities and the country's long term needs. While the policy has been set, we have asked HEFCE to consult widely on how it should be implemented. Our policy not only responds to the challenge in the Leitch report to increase the proportion of the work force with higher level skills from under 30 per cent. now to over 40 per cent. by 2020 but is also fairer to both taxpayers and students who have not yet entered higher education. Many of those in the work force without higher level skills may be mature learners who wish to study part-time. The overall effect of these changes on the income of individual institutions will depend on how successful they are in attracting students who meet our priorities. Every institution will have an incentive to maximise its share of the £100 million which will be redistributed through this change.

Spink - Graduates completing second degrees

Date: Thursday, 25 October 2007

Analysis

The following question was answered on 25 October 2007.

Contents

Bob Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills (1) if he will commission an assessment of the benefits to (a) individual students, (b) businesses and (c) the economy of graduates completing second degrees; and if he will make a statement; [150819]

(2) what advice is provided to graduates on the (a) merits and (b) mechanics of pursuing a second degree; and whether guidance is available on the choice of subject. [150844]

Bill Rammell: We have asked HEFCE to phase out the support it gives to institutions for students doing a second degree at an **equivalent or lower level** in order to redistribute around £100 million a year by 2010/11 towards our priorities. While there may be some benefit to individuals and their employers, in them retraining for a second qualification at the same level, it is generally fairer to both students and the taxpayer to give priority to those either entering higher education for the first time, or progressing to higher qualifications. All of the £100 million will be redistributed to support our priorities, including the challenges posed by Sandy Leitch around the proportion of the work force with graduate level skills from under 30 per cent. to over 40 per cent. by 2020. At the same time, we also published details of these changes

and the rationale for them so that prospective students both with and without existing Higher Education qualifications can plan ahead in the knowledge of our priorities.

Lancaster - Part-time education funding

Date: Monday, 12 November 2007

Analysis

The following question was tabled by Mark Lancaster for answer by the Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills on 15 November 2007.

This question appears at number 15 on the order paper.

Contents

Commons Question – 12 Nov 07

*15

Mr Mark Lancaster (North East Milton Keynes): What assessment he has made of the effect of the decision to withdraw funding from institutions for **equivalent or lower qualifications** students on the part-time educational sector.

(164263)

Hayes - Higher education funding

Date: Monday, 07 January 2008

Analysis

The following question was tabled on 7 January for answer on 9 January 2008.

Contents

Commons Question - 07 Jan 08

312

Mr John Hayes (South Holland & The Deepings): To ask the Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills, further to his letter of 7th September 2007 to the Chairman of the Higher Education Funding Council for England, whether a UK resident or citizen with a qualification from an overseas institution deemed to be equivalent to or lower than a qualification which they wish to study will qualify for public funding for higher education courses in English institutions where they have not previously accessed public funding for higher education within the UK.

(177292)

Hayes - Funding for equivalent and lower qualifications (Re-skilling of students)

Date: Monday, 17 December 2007

Analysis

The following question was tabled on 17 December for answer on 7 January 2008.

Contents

Commons Question - 17 Dec 07

184

Mr John Hayes (South Holland & The Deepings): To ask the Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills, pursuant to his request to the Higher Education Funding Council for England of 7th September on funding for equivalent and lower qualifications as additional degrees, what funding will be available for re-skilling students for higher level qualifications.

(175803)

Hayes - Funding request for equivalent and lower qualifications

Date: Monday, 17 December 2007

Analysis

The following question was tabled on 17 December for answer on 7 January 2008.

Contents

Commons Question - 17 Dec 07

176

Mr John Hayes (South Holland & The Deepings): To ask the Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills, whether he consulted (a) the Confederation of British Industry and (b) professional bodies before making his request to the Higher Education Funding Council for England on 7th September on funding for equivalent and lower qualifications as additional degrees.

(175788)

Hayes - Funding for equivalent and lower qualifications

Date: Monday, 17 December 2007

Analysis

The following question was tabled on 17 December for answer on 7 January 2008.

Contents

Commons Question - 17 Dec 07

175

Mr John Hayes (South Holland & The Deepings): To ask the Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills, further to his request to the Higher Education Funding Council for England of 7th September on funding for equivalent and lower qualifications as additional degrees, which professional higher level qualifications will

no longer receive funding.
(175787)

Hayes - Equivalent and Lower Qualifications

Date: Monday, 17 December 2007

Analysis

The following question was tabled on 17 December for answer on 7 January 2008.

Contents

Commons Question - 17 Dec 07

174

Mr John Hayes (South Holland & The Deepings): To ask the Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills, pursuant to his request to the Higher Education Funding Council for England of 7th September on funding for equivalent and lower qualifications (ELOs) as additional degrees, what forecasts he has made of fees to be charged to non-exempt full-time undergraduate ELO students.
(175786)

Stoate - Pharmacy profession

Date: Tuesday, 11 December 2007

Analysis

The following question was tabled on 11 December for answer on 13 December 2007.

Contents

Commons Question - 11 Dec 07

313

Dr Howard Stoate (Dartford): To ask the Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills, what assessment he has made of the impact on the pharmacy profession of his Department's proposal to withdraw funding for the teaching of students studying for qualifications deemed to be of an equivalent or lower level to those they have already received; and if he will make a statement.
(174218)

Lords Questions

Quirk - Part-Time Higher Education for Adults

Date: Tuesday, 04 December 2007

Analysis

The following questions regarding support for adults to pursue part-time higher education, were answered by Lord Triesman.

Contents

Lords Answer - 04 Dec 07

Higher Education: Adult Students

Lord Quirk asked Her Majesty's Government:

Whether they will increase the amount of support and encouragement for adults to pursue part-time higher education.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (Lord Triesman): My Lords, in 2006-07, we introduced in England the most generous package of financial support that has ever been offered to part-time students undertaking courses. It included increasing the maximum fee grant by 27 per cent and an above-inflation increase in the income threshold for receiving this support. The number of England-domiciled part-time students receiving grants for fees rose from 34,700 to 42,000 between 2005-06 and 2006-07, which is an increase of 21 per cent. Devolved Administrations are responsible for supporting their own students.

Lord Quirk: My Lords, I thank the Minister for that reassuring response, which omitted any question of "but"; namely, that the consultation period on the Secretary of State's September letter ends this coming Friday. The Minister will recall that, in the vigorous debate last night, there was nigh unanimous support throughout the House for the Government to take a different stand from that proposed by the Secretary of State. How does he propose to respond to the representations made on behalf of Birkbeck, the OU and many other providers, which are protesting about the proposals in the Secretary of State's 7 September letter?

Lord Triesman: My Lords, the support would have been unanimous last night had I not defended the Government's position, but I was proud and privileged to do that. The consultation is taking place. As I said last night, I am determined that it should be serious. I am determined that the points made in the debate in your Lordships' House last night should feed in even in these last few days of the consultation. Some substantive issues were raised and I said that they should be considered properly. I cannot give undertakings about the outcome of the consultation, but I hope that I indicated then, as I do again now, that serious points were made that are well worth considering, and I shall ensure that they are.

Lord Mackay of Clashfern: My Lords, does the Minister agree that it is a happy situation that innovative means of progress in education, both part-time adult education and other education, are possible in this country, whereas they are not possible with safety in other parts of the world? I am sure that we would all like to congratulate our colleagues on their success in bringing back the teacher from Sudan.

Noble Lords: Hear, hear!

Lord Triesman: My Lords, I could hardly endorse that thought more. It is not so long since I was Minister for Africa and I have watched these events with the same levels of anxiety as all noble Lords will have experienced. I am delighted that she is back. I hope that this may provide some sort of platform for getting a better understanding. It would be a great disappointment if teachers from the United Kingdom did not teach in other parts of the world. People responsible for the countries in those parts of the world should welcome the teachers whom we send, as they contribute enormously.

Lord Morgan: My Lords, my noble friend will know that in relation to part-time higher education we on these Benches take a particular pride in the Open University, one of the great achievements of any Labour Government, comparable to the National Health Service. I think that my noble friend will acknowledge that the proposed policy on ELOs will cause problems for the Open University, so may I ask him in the most comradely way-contrary to last night-what proposals the Government have in mitigation?

Lord Triesman: My Lords, first, I hope that the House will look with caution at all figures produced about the likely consequences for the Open University. None the less, there is no doubt in my mind that there are consequences for a very great institution. In those circumstances, we need to work carefully with the Open University on a sustainable business model. It is an extremely innovative institution and I have no doubt that it can do a number of things to mitigate the circumstances to great effect. One thing that I am sure of is that we would not want to damage the stability or quality of the provision of the Open University, which I know has been enjoyed at first hand by a good many Members of this House.

Baroness Carnegy of Lour: My Lords, how on earth did it come about that the Government had this idea that was so clearly damaging to the Open University, which, as the Minister said, the Government and the whole nation value? How did it come about that anything so unwise could be promulgated?

Lord Triesman: My Lords, I do not wholly accept the notion that the policy has been unwise. To be clear, I should say that the aim is to increase the amount of money available to those who have never yet been to university or undertaken a first degree at all. Because there is a finite amount of money and it is not possible to extend it indefinitely, the choice was made to move priority from those who were going to study for a second first degree, or something equivalent, to those who had never studied for one at all. That is a decent policy objective, which in many universities will be thought to be appropriate.

Baroness Howe of Idlicote: My Lords, sadly, I could not be here last night, but I have read the very interesting debate. I declare an interest as an enthusiast for the Open University. I should very much like to have an answer to the point made by the noble Lord, Lord Rix, who asked how many women would be disadvantaged by this, given that the vast majority of them are coming back into education and need to upskill. He also wanted to know how many part-timers are women. This policy seems to run totally counter to every other effort on the part of the Government, who have been superb in pursuing equal opportunities for women.

Lord Triesman: My Lords, 57 per cent of the ELO students are women. As it happens, that is exactly the same proportion as women constitute in the non-ELO student

group. There is exact parity. About 10 million women in the workforce do not have a first higher-level qualification and they are among those whom we have sought to prioritise by this policy move. I hope that it will be accepted that the aim has been to ensure that women with no first qualification of that kind get a realistic prospect of obtaining one.

Morris of Manchester - Open University

Date: Monday, 19 November 2007

Analysis

The following question was tabled on 19 November 2007 for answer on 3 December 2007.

Contents

Lords Written Question - 19 Nov 07

Lord Morris of Manchester to ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have received on the effects for the Open University (OU) of their decision no longer to fund institutions for students studying for any qualification at a level equivalent to or lower than one they have already obtained; what estimate they have made of the annual cost of this decision to the OU; and what action they will take. HL356