

Appendix: Summary of Panel recommendations

Recommendation	Rationale	Focus of recommendations
Strengthening technical education	England needs a stronger technical and vocational education system at sub-degree levels to meet the structural skills shortages that are contributing to the UK's weak productivity performance	Improved funding, a better maintenance offer, and a more coherent suite of higher technical and professional qualifications would help level the playing field with degrees and drive up both the supply of and demand for such courses.
Increasing opportunities for everyone	Despite the very large increase in participation in HE by young people, the total number of people involved in tertiary education has declined. Almost 40% of 25 year olds do not progress beyond GCSEs as their highest qualification and social mobility shows little sign of improvement.	<p>Recommendations seek to address these problems by reversing cuts in adult skills provision, particularly at Level 3, and encouraging part time and later life learning.</p> <p>Proposals seek to recognise interim milestones by awarding L4 or 5 qualifications achieved in the course of studying a Level 6 programme, making them a more widely recognised and visible part of the system, particularly for learners who do not complete the full undergraduate degree.</p> <p>The Careers Strategy should also be rolled out nationally so that every secondary school is able to be part of a Careers Hub (Hub in GM was launched in October 2018 and involves 36 schools and colleges).</p>
Reforming and refunding the FE college network	FE colleges are an essential part of the national educational infrastructure and should play a core role in the delivery of higher technical	Reform and refund the FE college network by means of an increased base rate of funding for high return courses and investment in the workforce to improve recruitment and retention.

	and intermediate level training.	<p>Commit to an additional dedicated £1bn capital investment over the coming spending review period (in addition to T level funding), and consider redirecting HE capital grant to FE.</p> <p>Rationalisation of the network to even out provision across over-supplied and under-supplied areas, funding for some specialised colleges and closer links with HE and other providers would help establish a genuinely national system of higher technical education. FE colleges should also have a protected title (in the same way that 'university' is protected) in order to distinguish them from other types of provider.</p> <p>ESFA and Office for Students should establish a joint working party to align regulatory requirements and improve information exchange between HE/FE, to report to the SoS by March 2020.</p>
Bearing down on low value HE	There is a misalignment at the margin between England's otherwise outstanding system of HE and the country's economic requirements. A twenty-year market in lightly regulated HE has greatly expanded the number of skilled graduates and widened participation for students from lower socio-economic groups, but for a small but significant minority of degree students the university experience leads to disappointment.	Universities are encouraged to bear down on low value degrees and to incentivise/increase the provision of courses better aligned with the economy's needs. The Office for Students will have a key role to play as a regulator for HE.

Addressing HE funding	Generous and undirected funding has led to an over-supply of some courses at great cost to the taxpayer and a corresponding under-supply of graduates in strategically important sectors. The recommendations would restore more control over taxpayer support and would reduce what universities may charge each degree student.	Universities should find further efficiency savings over the coming years, maximum fees for students should be reduced to a maximum of £7,500 a year (currently £9,250), and more of the taxpayer funding should come through grants directed to disadvantaged students and to high value and high cost subjects.
Increasing flexibility and lifetime learning	Employment patterns are changing fast with shorter job cycles and longer working lives requiring many people to reskill and upskill.	<p>Introduction of a lifelong learning loan allowance is recommended, for higher technical and degree level learning at any stage of an adult's career for full and part-time students. To encourage retraining and flexible learning, this should be available for modules of credit-based qualifications at levels 4, 5 and 6. Proposals should facilitate transfer between different institutions.</p> <p>Greater investment in so-called 'second chance' learning at intermediate levels proposed, with the recommendation to increase the funding rate for the most economically valuable adult education courses and to remove current restrictions so that first full level 2 and 3 qualifications are available free of charge to all learners regardless of age or employment status.</p> <p>Panel endorses the government's National Retraining Scheme as a potentially valuable supplement to college based learning.</p>
Supporting disadvantaged students	Disadvantaged students need better financial support, improved choices and more effective advice and guidance	Provide additional support and reduce the level of debt upon graduation by reintroducing maintenance grants for students from low income households (at least £3,000 per year for individuals with maximum entitlement), and by

	to benefit fully from post-18 education. Particular concerns were raised about the assumption of a parental contribution.	<p>increasing and better targeting the government's funding for disadvantaged students.</p> <p>Funding available for bursaries should also increase to accommodate the growth in Level 2 and 3 adult learners expected based on related recommendations.</p>
Ensuring those who benefit from higher education contribute fairly	Most graduates benefit significantly from participating in higher education – as does the economy and wider society. Panel endorses the established principle that students and the state should share the cost of tertiary education, as well as supporting the income-contingent repayment approach as a means of delivering this fairly, with those benefitting the most making the greatest contribution. However, public misunderstanding is high.	<p>Better communication is required, including a new name, the Student Contribution System, rather than talking in terms of 'loans', 'debt', 'interest', etc. More graduates should repay their loans in full over their lifetimes; the repayment period for future students should be extended and the repayment threshold should in effect be frozen. These changes – with the reduction in fees – would apply only to students entering higher education from 2021-22 at the earliest: students starting before then would not be affected.</p> <p>Some aspects of the present system appear to be unfairly punitive and the panel recommends reducing students' in-study interest charges and capping graduates' lifetime repayments.</p>
Improving the apprenticeship offer	Apprenticeships can deliver benefits both for apprentices and employers but there is evidence of a mismatch between the economy's strategic requirements and current apprenticeship starts.	Together with recent government reforms, the panel's recommendations aim to make further improvements in the quality of the apprenticeship offer by providing learners with better wage return information, strengthening Ofsted's role (currently one of a number of agencies and regulators in this space) – and thus the quality of providers – and better understanding and addressing the barriers SMEs face within the apprenticeship system. Greater clarity and transparency is also required when processing new

		<p>standards that have been submitted by employer trailblazer groups for approval.</p> <p>In view of the finite funding which is available for apprenticeships, the panel recommends that apprenticeships at degree level and above should normally be funded only for those who do not already have a publicly-funded degree. Should demand outstrip funding, prioritisation should be in line with needs of the Industrial Strategy.</p> <p>Panel recommends that all approved providers in receipt of government funding to deliver training, including apprenticeships, must make clear provision for learner protection in the event of closure or insolvency, bringing independent providers in line with all other parts of the post-18 system.</p>
--	--	--