



EPC Bulletin | October 2021 | Twitter [@EngProfCouncil](https://twitter.com/EngProfCouncil)

Welcome to the new academic year, we hope you enjoyed something of a break over the summer.

For our autumn term opener, the EPC is delighted to announce the annual Recruitment & Admissions Forum, a web series again this year, with the theme 'Doing it differently'. Building on our popular webcasts over the last 18 months, we are offering you three distinct online events – totally free to members – during November and December. As always, our line-up of speakers is second to none. The Forum is aimed at all staff involved in recruitment and admissions in any engineering discipline – from early career staff through lecturers and researchers to department heads, deans of faculties, PVCs and VCs – anyone with an interest in recruitment and admissions who wishes to stay on top of the unprecedented changes and to develop their strategy and practice. More details below.

In the news, it's all about the money as all eyes turn to the Comprehensive Spending Review. We anticipate news affecting fee levels, loan repayment terms and foundation years, which may join autumn policy statements on minimum entry requirements, contextual offers and the TEF.

We continue to actively respond to the consultations of the day (see below) and are thrilled to see the significant impact of EPC's influential policy work on improving degree apprenticeships in engineering.

EPC news

ENGINEERING ENROLMENTS SURVEY

Every year, we survey EPC member universities on their engineering enrolments to provide you, our members, an exclusive first glance at the sector-wide engineering enrolments headlines long before official data becomes available. We hope that as many of you as possible will get involved this year; the more responses we receive, the more robust the wider insight we can provide. The results will be launched during the Recruitment and Admissions Forum and will also be available online.

An enrolments survey contact in each member institution has now been invited to contribute to our annual survey by Friday 29th October (or Friday 5th November if those completing your survey are also responsible for the HESA returns). If you would like further information, to submit a response, or to find out who in your institution is leading on this, please [contact us](#).

WOMEN'S ENGINEERING SOCIETY

We are delighted to welcome WES as the EPC's newest partner organisation. The Women's Engineering Society is a charity and a professional network of women engineers, scientists and technologists offering inspiration, support and professional development. Working in partnership, WES supports and inspires women to achieve as engineers, scientists and as leaders; it encourages the education of engineering; and it supports companies with gender diversity and inclusion.

TOMORROW'S ENGINEERS

Following her appearance at our ['Engineering engineering' event in July](#), we were keen to get Dr Hillary Leever, CEO of [EngineeringUK](#), to share her views on the power of outreach. See her [guest blog](#) on the EPC website.

Upcoming events

EPC RECRUITMENT & ADMISSIONS FORUM WEB SERIES: Doing it differently – Getting in: Entrance requirements, 24th November 2021

We open our Recruitment & Admissions Forum with a deep dive into widening access, increasing diversity and the role of admissions. How are different types of provider challenging established practice? What is the place and power of entry requirements? How can we do it differently?

To explore these themes and look for innovative solutions, we will float a series of provocative blue-sky ideas and invite our panel of experts – and our audience – to explore what we could do differently. Do we need entry requirements? Is Maths A level important? Should we be more radical with contextual offers and other levers for diverse student recruitment?

[Book your tickets now.](#)

EPC RECRUITMENT & ADMISSIONS FORUM WEB SERIES: Doing it differently – Getting out there: International students and postgrads, 1 December 2021

Continuing our Recruitment & Admissions Forum Doing it Differently theme, we'll be looking at innovative practice in recruiting international and PGT students.

We are honoured to be joined by Vivienne Stern, Director of Universities UK International, to present an overview of what can be done differently in the competitive landscape to attract international postgraduate students in the light of Brexit and the Covid pandemic. This will be followed by a Q&A with Vivienne and a panel discussion to explore different perspectives between providers and over time.

[Book your tickets now.](#)

EPC RECRUITMENT & ADMISSIONS FORUM WEB SERIES: Doing it differently – Getting on: Lifelong Learning, 8 December 2021

The third in our 2021 Recruitment & Admissions Forum Series with a deep dive into lifelong learning. How can we realise a vision for lifelong learning? What can we do differently to maximise the impact of policy change? Introduced by Martin Eason, who will outline provocative ideas about what we could do differently to promote lifelong learning for discussion by our lively panel of experts and our audience.

We close the series with the launch of the EPC Engineering Enrolments Survey results, including the opportunity for questions.

[Book your tickets now.](#)

EPC HYBRID EVENT: The Crucible Project, 16th February 2022

During the course of the 2020 Annual Congress, *Industry & Academia: Supercharging the Crucible*, members explored the interface between industry and academia and some of the challenges to developing the relationship between industry and academia. This highlighted five areas of mutual interest:

- Universities' and businesses' shared role in regional development
- Collaborating with industry for teaching and learning
- Knowledge exchange
- Research
- Graduate employability and recruitment

The EPC now wants to build on this by launching the *Crucible Project*, an initiative to help our members build better industry links by sharing experiences and developing resources for all EPC members to access. We are planning to hold an online Industry-Academia event, featuring a diverse range of case studies of innovative and engaging collaborations between academics and industry, on 16th February 2022 and to produce a toolkit (or a series of toolkits) which members can access from the EPC website.

If you would like to get involved, see the opportunities section below, or register your interest [here](#).

EPC EVENT: Congress 2022: A Better World, 7th to 9th June 2022, UWE Bristol

It's been too long coming, but the EPC Annual Congress will be returning to a face-to-face event in 2022. Our two-year theme is *A Better World*, in which Congress will pick up on our Congress webinar series in 2021 with a focus on ethics, sustainability and recovery. It will be held at UWE, Bristol, from 7th to 9th June 2022. The line-up of speakers is yet to be announced, but it will include high-profile speakers and leading experts. As a teaser, however, we can reveal that they will include Dame Ottoline Leyser, CEO of UKRI, and Prof Steve West, President of Universities UK. Bookings will open shortly.

EPC SECTORAL GROUP EVENT: AAU/Aerospace Sectoral Group AGM, 22 October 2021, Online

The AAU/Aerospace Sectoral Group AGM will be held online on Friday 22 October and will be followed by the 2021 Student Conference. The conference schedule will be made available asap along with the uniform resource locator. More information and an agenda is available on the [EPC website](#).

EPC SECTORAL GROUP EVENT: ACED Annual Conference 2021, 18-19 November 2021, Anglia Ruskin University, Chelmsford Campus

The Annual Conference this year is planned (COVID permitting) as an in-person event on Thursday 18th November (all day, including evening dinner) and Friday 19th November (morning, and lunch) on the theme of 'Civil Engineering – Leading Sustainable Change'. Speakers from industry and academia will inform a debate between the participants over the two days about the nature of the climate emergency that we face and the best ways in which we can prepare our graduates to contribute to its mitigation. For further details, see the [EPC website](#).

EPC SECTORAL GROUP EVENT: AAU Annual International Multiphysics Conference, 9-10 December 2021

The 16th Annual International Multiphysics Conference will be held Thursday 9 – Friday 10 December 2021 online and the EPC in conjunction with the AAU will sponsor the Aerospace Session. The keynote address will be given by Dr Hassan Khawaja (The Arctic University of Norway based at Tromsø). More information is available on the [EPC website](#).

In the news

MONEY MATTERS: cabinet reshuffle

Following the long-awaited Cabinet reshuffle, we welcome chemical engineering graduate Nadhim Zahawi, as the new Secretary of State for Education (to replace Gavin Williamson). Michelle Donolan expands her remit to include Further Education (now Minister of State for Higher and Further Education) with the support of a junior minister (Alex Burghart, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Apprenticeships and Skills, who will also have responsibility for access and the student experience). While this could lead to a more unified focus across Further and Higher Education – as mooted in the Skills for Jobs white paper – it could also lead to a single budget for both, leaving no option but to rob Peter to pay Paul.

MONEY MATTERS: comprehensive spending review

The Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) scheduled for later this autumn is expected to include the final instalment of the government's response to Augar Review. The EPC is expecting announcements on the following:

- Higher education fee levels. We understand that these are likely to remain frozen at current level which is the best that can be hoped for for university budgets (this represents a continuing decline in funding in real terms) unless the fees for any non-engineering courses are cut, which might be yet the case and would mean that Engineering would need to bear a greater cost of central administration. A cut for one ends up as a cut across the board.
- Loan repayment terms. It is understood that the government may reduce the payment threshold on loans to £20-23K (in England).
- Minimum entry requirement. Now that the costs of students' loans that are never repaid has been reflected more clearly in the way they are included in the nation's accounts, the Treasury is keen to limit numbers going into HE. A subtle means of doing this is to impose a minimum entry requirement to qualify for funding. Before being sacked, Williamson openly floated the idea of closing the door to anyone without a level 2 (GCSE) pass in Maths and English. One could argue that any bar is an affront to HEI autonomy and in conflict with HERA 2017 which protects any student with potential to succeed. Could it be raised over time? What about non-GCSE entry and lifelong learning approach?
- HE Foundation years. The Augar Review proposed to axe this pathway into HE, which the EPC strongly believes could be extremely damaging to access. These can be a better route into a course and they've been an expanding option during pandemic.
- Contextual admissions. The government has previously held that contextual offer grades are "patronising" to applicants. EPC has previously stated their importance to wider student access.

MONEY MATTERS: Augar review response

While we still await the government's response to a number of the Augar Review's recommendations, you'll recall that a partial response in the form of the Skills for Jobs white paper saw the signalling of a lifelong loan entitlement. A £2m trial to develop Higher Education short courses in support of their proposals to encourage lifelong learning will see up to 20 English providers offering short courses in STEM (as well as education, "digital innovation" and health care).

Meanwhile, there is an insightful Wonkhe [analysis](#) of the current engineering sub-degree provision held in Unistats which highlights that, although this is currently dominated by FE providers, there is HE representation across all engineering disciplines excepting naval architecture (including relatively generous provision in Wales).

MONEY MATTERS: international students

Last month, [HEPI and UUK International sponsored research](#) calculated international students' annual worth as £25.9 billion, net of the estimated £2.9 billion international student burden on public services.

[EPC analysis](#) has shown that Engineering is heavily dependent on overseas enrolments with nearly one in three enrolments in Engineering and technology coming from outside of the UK pre-pandemic, nearly double the proportion across all science subjects and far greater than the one in five across all subjects.

MONEY MATTERS: high-cost subject funding

During the summer break, an additional £10 million OfS funding for high-cost subjects was [announced](#). This follows the government's controversial redistribution of arts funding to medicine and STEM earlier this year. This may sound like positive news for Engineering departments, but cuts to other subject areas may mean that STEM areas need to bear a greater proportion of institutional costs. For STEM subjects where costs continue to outstrip fees (even at the higher levels), this move may – counter-intuitively – make them *less* viable not more.

TURING SCHEME

In August it was [announced](#) that 40,000 students will be awarded places to study and work abroad with the Turing Scheme. In our [joint study](#) with UCL's Centre for Engineering Education on the experiences and perceptions of European (EU) engineering students and academic staff in UK universities, the EPC recommended that the new Turing scheme should be more than just replacement for Erasmus+. By enabling engagement in European student exchange, the UK's participation should be a springboard to wider international engagement in Europe and globally.

INNOVATION STRATEGY

Following its stealth withdrawal of the Industrial Strategy, the government has now launched its [Innovation Strategy](#). This highlights that government sees innovation in universities as most impactful where it is joined to business behind a clear civic mission and the EPC will continue to highlight that investment into innovation in universities will support R&D growth. The forthcoming Levelling Up Strategy (expected next month) is due to replace much of what the Industrial Strategy set out to achieve.

Consultations

OFFICE FOR STUDENTS: consultation on Quality & Standards

The Office for Students undertook a preliminary consultation on a range of quality and standards issues during the winter of 2020-21 (the EPC response is available on the [EPC website](#)). Their latest consultation took forward some aspects of that consultation and made more detailed proposals about new regulatory requirements. The consultation did not cover student outcomes measures. The EPC has submitted a representative response by the Engineering Education, Employability and Skills Committee highlighting that, on its own, the level of detail on this consultation is too narrow and insular to provide useful grounds for constructive comment. The brief response is available on the [EPC website](#).

IfATE: consultation on Degree Apprenticeships

The EPC has submitted a response to the Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education's proposals for changes to existing policies based on their four years' experience of approving degree apprenticeships and a need for more collaborative working. We welcome the Institute's proposed changes which take on board four of the five key areas addressed EPC's 2018 paper, [Experience enhanced: Improving engineering degree apprenticeships](#). This EPC project which has included follow-on influence with the Institute and DfE has made a significant policy contribution, addressing the issues that concern the academic community about degree apprenticeships.

Our formal response, together with a copy of the Institute's PowerPoint summary of the consultation (as they have now removed the consultation web page), is available on [the EPC website](#).

Meanwhile, the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education is reviewing a total of 58 occupational standards – which set out the key knowledge, skills and behaviours employers expect to be covered by apprenticeships and wider technical education – as part of the route review covering engineering and manufacturing. More information in the [Institute's blog](#).

ENGINEERING COUNCIL: Consultation on international recognition

In the recently launched Engineering Council 2025 Strategy '[Advancing Regulation](#)', international activities are an important theme. The Engineering Council would like to understand the value that UK and international students place upon international recognition, as well as understanding the value to UK HEIs of international recognition of engineering programmes. They are specifically interested in recognition under the [International Education Alliance \(IEA\) Educational Accords](#). The Accords are generic benchmarks for engineering programmes that typically act as the academic base for professional registration and are not standards or forms of accreditation.

You can [take the survey](#) before the **Friday 22nd October deadline**. The questions also [available as a pdf](#) to assist you in responding.

TEF: review

The Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) is set to be reviewed in a consultation this autumn. The new scheme, as yet unnamed, will be published in a similar way to the current one – albeit with new ratings of 'excellence'.

Opportunities

CALL FOR CASE STUDIES: The EPC Crucible Project

EPC members are invited to submit case studies, in whatever form, on the above areas of interest. We would especially welcome case studies created collaboratively between industry and academia partners. If you would like to get involved, please register your interest [here](#).

Please also share this opportunity with your Industrial Advisory Board or those within your university that deal with engineering industry collaboration and KTPs.

TOMORROW'S ENGINEERS WEEK

The EPC is proud to support Tomorrow's Engineers Week (#TEWeek21) again this year, which takes place from 8 to 12 November. The 2021 edition coincides with COP26 Climate Summit in Glasgow and will focus on highlighting how engineering careers can contribute to tackling climate change and achieving #netzero. Find out more and how you can get involved at <http://www.teweek.org.uk> and by following @teweekuk on social media.



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