



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

With access and participation thrust back into the sector limelight this week, our autumn series of events couldn't be timelier, especially given that we tackled head-on the proposition that "fair access is dead". In the first of our series of three Recruitment and Admissions Forum webcasts, we invited a panel of experts and EPC members to debate a host of 'provocations' about entry requirements, including the need for maths and physics, the introduction of minimum entry grades, contextual offers, the ways that admissions processes might bake in social disadvantage (such as personal statements), and, of course, post-qualification admissions. More below.

Of course, admissions and recruitment activity is important way beyond enrolments, as we are reminded by HE and FE Minister Michelle Donelan's renewed commitment to drive down non-completion as part of the levelling up agenda. The health of recruitment and selection in engineering HE is all of our business, and the EPC is thrilled to bring you news of our annual Engineering Enrolments Survey. Despite the challenges being faced by the sector, our survey has stood up to the return to a full appraisal of enrolments at discipline and study level, with response rates broadly in line with those pre-pandemic. We look forward to launching the results of our Engineering Enrolments Survey on our third Recruitment and Admissions Forum series.

In wider news, while we were all left disappointed that the long-awaited Comprehensive Spending Review lacked any detail regarding the host of outstanding issues covered in our previous *Bulletin*, news of a pending response to Augar might shed more light. Luckily, there is nothing the EPC team loves more than responding to policy consultations. Again, see below for open activities.

EPC news

RECRUITMENT AND ADMISSIONS FORUM SERIES: Doing it differently

We've kicked off our 'doing it differently' themed Recruitment & Admissions Forum in style this week. Our Entry Requirements session – presented intriguing, articulate and thoughtful debate throughout, covering so much ground regarding selection criteria. Prof Georgina Harris, Dean of STEM at Arden University was joined by Kim Eccleston (UCAS), Liz Jones (UCL), Elena Liqueste (Dyson Institute) and Judy Raper (TEDI-London) to challenge some of the trickier issues we face with regards to entry to engineering. Superbly chaired by the EPC's Recruitment and Admissions Committee's Vice Chair, Steve Bullock (Bristol). A huge thanks to all who participated and attended. The recording is available on the [EPC website](#) and is well worth watching if you missed the event.

Be sure not to miss out on our next forum on 1 December 2021, focusing on recruitment of international and PGT students. See EVENTS below.

ENGINEERING ENROLMENTS SURVEY

Many thanks to those who took the time to complete the enrolments survey. We have heard from around half of our members on how this autumn's enrolments have been for them. We greatly appreciate those who took the time to complete it. The results launch will take place during session three of the Recruitment and Admissions Forum Series, so be sure to book a place to get a reading of this year's enrolment temperature long before comprehensive data for other disciplines is available.

Upcoming events

EPC RECRUITMENT & ADMISSIONS FORUM WEB SERIES: Doing it differently – Getting out there: International students and postgrads, 1st 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 delighted to welcome a panel who will provide an expert overview of where international and postgrad recruitment stands and what can be done differently in the competitive landscape to attract international and postgraduate students in the light of Brexit and the Covid pandemic. The panel will explore different perspectives between providers and over time and with contributions from the audience. With confirmed speakers:

- Prof Adam Clare, previous Director of Admissions for Engineering, The University of Nottingham
- Mohamed Elmaghbi, Director of Admissions for Engineering, The University of Nottingham
- Steph Harris, Acting Assistant Director for Policy and Global Engagement, Universities UK International
- Bobby Mehta, BUILA Chair, Lead DfE, OfS, UUKi and Director of UoP Global, University of Portsmouth
- Prof Simon Pollard OBE, Pro Vice Chancellor International & Recruitment, Cranfield University

[Book your tickets now.](#)

EPC RECRUITMENT & ADMISSIONS FORUM WEB SERIES: Doing it differently – Getting on: Lifelong Learning, 8th 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 audience and a lively panel of experts:

- Prof Bev Gibbs, Chief Academic Officer, New Model Institute for Technology and Engineering (NMITE)
- Dr Jon Gill, Assistant Principal [Head of Faculty (Technology Studies), Head of Apprenticeships & Director of County Training], Herefordshire, Ludlow & North Shropshire College
- Jessica Leigh Jones MBE, Co-Founder and CEO, iungo Solutions
- Prof Gareth Neighbour, Head of School - Engineering & Innovation, The Open University

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

The EPC recently launched an exciting new initiative, the Crucible Project. The project aims to help members build better industry links by sharing experiences and developing resources for all EPC members to access.

Members had already explored the interface between industry and academia during the course of the 2020 Annual Congress, *Industry & Academia: Supercharging the Crucible*, 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

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 in January.

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

The 16th Annual International Multiphysics Conference will be held Thursday 9th – Friday 10th 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

AUGAR REVIEW RESPONSE AND AN HE WHITE PAPER?

After the budget and associated Comprehensive Spending Review lacked the expected response to the recommendations in the Augar report and the conclusion of the post-18 review of education and funding, rumours started of an HE White Paper, supposedly due by the end of this month.

That's clearly not happening, but it does seem like advisors in DfE were trying hard to reach agreement with other departments. The official line is now that the final Augar response will be published "soon" (geological definitions of "soon" have not however been ruled out).

Shadow Secretary of State Kate Green has asked for a timetable regarding parliamentary progress in support of the Lifelong Loan Entitlement (LLE) and when the "damaging rumours" about cuts to higher education funding will be brought to an end. The Minister Michelle Donelan promised this week that there would be an open consultation on the LLE.

All this suggests a White Paper is in the offing. Sometime. If it comes, we expect it to cover the financials of HE and the LLE (fee levels, loan repayment terms and who's entitled to what for what) but we also think it might provide clarity on issues relating to skills planning, quality, outcomes metrics, foundation years, minimum entry requirements and post-qualifications admissions. Many of these themes feature in EPC's [consultation campaigns](#).

In addition, EPC's Chief Executive, Johnny Rich, argues that [blanket minimum entry requirements for higher education would close doors to opportunity](#). Meanwhile Stella Fowler and Vicky Howell staged [an impassioned defense of the role and value of foundation years in higher education](#) in Wonkhe last month.

BTEC & T-LEVELS

The Government has extended its timetable for scrapping BTECs, and it is possible many of these qualifications could coexist with the incoming T levels. Nadhim Zahawi's [opening speech](#) in the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill second reading debate revealed two significant policy shifts by the Westminster government:

- BTEC qualifications get a year's reprieve and many will continue to play an important role in 16-19 education "for the foreseeable future"
- The level 2 English and Maths exit requirements will be removed from the new T level qualifications.

There was significant pushback on both of these points during the Lords stages of the Bill's passage through the House of Lords – with many peers arguing that abandoning BTECs and designing the new T levels to include expectations of academic success at level 2, would disadvantage many young people with an interest in further vocational and technical qualifications.

The EPC echoes this criticism and has fed into the Education and Skills Group of the Royal Academy of Engineering (ESG, formerly E4E) response to the DfE's consultation on level 3 qualifications (considering whether to axe BTECs). We maintain that BTECs continue to help widen pathways into engineering; the EPC's recent [Engineering Opportunity](#) report also shows that Engineering is a great social mobility tool (it flattens the differences in outcomes based on socioeconomic status and so promotes social mobility) particularly when coupled with HE entry via BTECs.

We fully support the need to ensure that the BTEC qualifications continue to play an important role in providing access to engineering HE and have recently contributed to the ESG response to the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Youth Employment's inquiry into vocational education and

the labour market as they seek to understand concerns with the removal of funding for some vocational and technical qualifications.

STRATEGIC PLANNING: all change

Amid the pending policy storm, Nicola Dandridge has announced that she will step down as Chief Executive of the Office for Students, which means that the newly appointed Director for Fair Access and Participation, John Blake, will be joined by a new boss, a new free speech czar and a new OfS strategy. Meanwhile, universities have been told to go back to the drawing board with their access and participation plans and given a host of new targets to support pre-18 attainment by the Minister.

Not to miss the strategic planning round, the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education has also launched its new [‘Employer Centred – Future Facing’ strategic plan](#). The plan sets out key priorities for support a high-skilled and adaptable workforce to 2024, including:

- Delivering for employers – the IfATE hopes to provide much greater accessibility from learners of all backgrounds to progress from entry to degree level training
- Building a more integrated skills system – this includes plans to ensure apprenticeships and other technical qualifications can support the widest uptake and use.
- Securing continuous improvement – the IfATE aim to promote a continuous improvement philosophy and new approaches.

EDUCATION REFORMS: in Wales

It’s not just England that’s got reform fever: there does seem to be some alignment of thought with the Minister’s recently expanded remit to include Higher and Further Education in Wales. The Welsh Government has set out plans to [radically reform post-16 education](#). They are to establish a new Commission for Tertiary Education and Research, leading to a unified body comprising all elements of post-16 education: colleges, universities, adult education, apprenticeships and sixth forms.

Consultations

CONSULTATION ON REVISION OF EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW REQUIREMENTS: The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW)

HEFCW is consulting on aligning external quality review cycles for higher education with requirements in Scotland and Northern Ireland. The Council is proposing to commission the Quality Assurance Agency to undertake external reviews in Wales over a five-year cycle as opposed to the current six years. It is also proposed they will include recommendations to providers on teaching quality enhancement, with institutions expected to have a clear strategy in relation to this.

The consultation closes on **17th December 2021** and will report in March 2022. The EPC proposes an executive response in collaboration with our Welsh members.

Consultation on OfS Strategy for 2022-25

The OfS is seeking views on its proposed strategy for 2022-25. The consultation proposes a plan of action that will guide their activities as a regulator over the next three years to ensure they are targeted, with effective sequence of work, and are able to achieve their aims and make best use of their resources. The proposals focus on quality and standards and equality of opportunity. They

cover their objectives and goals for the period, how they intend to deliver them, and a minor addition to the [regulatory framework](#).

The deadline for responses is **6th January 2022**. The EPC is currently considering its response on behalf of members.

Opportunities

CALL FOR CASE STUDIES: The EPC Crucible Project

We are seeking a diverse range of case studies of innovative and engaging collaborations between academics and industry to share at a joint Industry-Academia event on 16th February 2022. We will also produce a toolkit (or a series of toolkits) which members can access from the EPC website.

EPC members are invited to submit case studies, in whatever form, on the following areas of interest which emerged from the 2020 EPC Annual Congress, Industry & Academia: Supercharging the Crucible:

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

We would especially welcome case studies created collaboratively between industry and academia partners. If you have not yet submitted your brief pitch and would like to get involved, please register your interest [here](#).

The final deadline for the call for contributions is midnight on **November 29th**, so be quick if you want to play a key part in this exciting initiative. This is a competitive process and you will be contacted once the EPC Research Innovation and Knowledge Transfer Committee has met following the deadline to shortlist the proposals.

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.



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