



**EPC Bulletin | May 2022** | Twitter [@EngProfCouncil](https://twitter.com/EngProfCouncil)

---

While our advisory group is hard at work on phase two of our **Engineering Ethics** project, we were delighted to run a webinar to introduce our engineering ethics toolkit after the phase one outcomes were published on our website in February. Our webinar brought to the fore active conversations around how engineering educators can integrate ethics into their teaching, including how engineering students need to see ethics in action; how our resources can help educators feel less intimidated when teaching ethics; and how to deal with open ended questions with no ‘right’ answers. See more below...

Bookings have now officially closed for **EPC Congress 2022** and we are looking forward to seeing all of you who have booked or are speaking in Bristol very soon! This is *the* event in the EPC calendar, and we are thrilled to have such a fantastic line up of keynote talks, panel discussions and fun networking activities for you all to get involved in – see more details below...

As you will be well aware, this month saw the publication of the **REF 2021** results, with more staff than ever being considered in this year’s assessment. The overall picture showed quality of the majority of submissions hitting the two highest levels with 41% recognised as world-leading and 43% as internationally excellent. Engineering followed this at a national level with the majority of research judged to be world leading or internationally excellent with an overall GPA of 3.28. We have a blog of [expert reflections](#). See more below....

Additionally, OfS has announced a growth in the numbers of students achieving “**unexplained**” **first-class degrees** after their recently published data showed 84.4% of students attaining a first or 2:1 at undergraduate last year – a significant increase from the 67% seen a decade earlier. Could this have been caused by No Detriment policies put in place during the pandemic? This has coincided with a **Higher Education Bill**, announced in the Queen’s Speech this month, with a clear priority being OfS’s quest to tackle the issue of low-quality courses. See more details below...

---

## **EPC news**

### **Introducing the Engineering Ethics Toolkit Webinar**

Earlier this month the EPC held an incredibly successful online event to introduce our RAEng supported Engineering Ethics Toolkit, a growing resource designed to help engineering educators integrate ethics content into their teaching. This webinar saw around 100 attendees joining us for an hour of discussion on the engineering ethics scholarship and pedagogy behind our toolkit. The EPC would like to thank our fantastic panellists: Dr Sarah Jayne Hitt, Prof Raffaella Ocone, Prof Mike

Bramhall and Prof Matt Studley for some really eye-opening thoughts on what it was like to put the first phase of the toolkit together and why case studies were chosen as the main focus. We would also like to thank our wonderful attendees who contributed some fantastic and thought-provoking questions and points to consider in the Padlet we set up for the event. If you were not able to attend this event – please do check out the recording on the [EPC website](#) and/or catch up by reading through the live tweets available via [#EPCEngEthics](#).

### **CONSULTATION RESPONSE: Augar response**

The EPC has responded to part two of the Government's final proposals in response to the Augar Review, which included plans for student number controls (SNCs) and minimum eligibility requirements (MERs) to access HE student finance. We outlined the clear detriment to engineering that these, and associated proposals, would have and the wider impacts of this. You can view the consultation response on the [EPC website](#) or as a pdf [here](#).

### **CONSULTATION RESPONSE: Design of the UK's future research assessment system**

Research experts on the EPC's Research, Innovation and Knowledge Transfer Committee responded to Jisc's consultation – on behalf of the four funding bodies (Research England, Scottish Funding Council, Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, Department for the Economy, Northern Ireland) – on the design of the UK's [Future Research Assessment Programme \(FRAP\)](#). Every few years – the research assessment system (currently REF) is reviewed before a new exercise round begins, and this consultation asked specifically for views on the purposes of a future exercise; principles that should guide its development; and assessment criteria and processes. You can view the consultation response on the [EPC website](#) or as a pdf [here](#).

### **HONORARY DOCTORATE CELEBRATION**

We are delighted to congratulate Professor Anthony Unsworth, past EPC President, who was admitted to the honorary degree of Doctor of Engineering at Teesside University – DEng (honoris causa) at the end of April.

## **Upcoming events**

### **EPC EVENT: Congress 2022: A Better World, 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> June 2022, UWE Bristol**

Our flagship event of the year is coming up soon! Bookings have now closed and we are looking forward to welcoming all of you who have booked tickets or are speaking at Congress next month.

As you may know we have the following keynote speakers:

- **Dame Judith Hackitt**, Chair, Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety (following Grenfell)
- **The Rt Hon Chris Skidmore MP**, former Universities & Science Minister;
- **Prof Dame Ottoline Leyser DBE FRS**, Chief Executive, UK Research and Innovation (UKRI);
- **Prof Steve West CBE**, Vice-Chancellor, President, Universities UK and President and Chief Executive, UWE Bristol;
- **Dr Hayaatun Sillem CBE**, Chief Executive, Royal Academy of Engineering.
- **Simon Fanshawe OBE** will also be present to discuss his book *The Power of Difference* in which he explores how greater diversity and inclusion achieves better results (more information about his book is available [here](#)).

We also have a fantastic array of other experts who will be discussing:

- The role of universities in supporting sustainability

- A new kind of student
- Designing a curriculum for sustainability
- Engineering Ethics: a toolkit
- Emerging greener
- Working with industry for a better world
- Building professional values
- See more details on the individual speakers in each session on the [EPC website](#) (we have updated this part of the programme a lot since the last newsletter!)

The Congress dinner will be served aboard the icon of engineering that is Brunel's SS Great Britain and you will have the opportunity to tour and see live demonstrations in the cutting-edge Bristol Robotics Laboratory and UWE's new curriculum-led Engineering Block. Visit the [EPC website](#) for the full programme.

### **EPC EVENT: Congress public lecture, 7<sup>th</sup> June 2022**

**Dame Judith Hackitt DBE, FEng, FICHEM, FCGI** (Chair of the Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety - following Grenfell) will be the speaker for our Congress public lecture entitled "Engineering a better world: Lessons from events like Grenfell on delivering outcomes that benefit society". This lecture is open to the public – so be sure not to miss out on what will be an engaging and informative hour for all. It will take place in person at Bristol Business School, UWE, beginning at 18:30 on the Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> June. For those who cannot attend this lecture, the event will be recorded and made available on the EPC website after the event. Booking for the public lecture is open on Eventbrite [here](#) (for those who have not booked Congress tickets) – be sure to book your place soon, as spaces are limited.

### **EPC EVENT: Annual General Meeting**

Our Annual General Meeting will be held on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> June from 09:15-10:00 in Lecture Theatre 2X112, Bristol Business School, UWE Bristol, Coldharbour Lane, Bristol BS16 1QY as part of the EPC Annual Congress. You don't need to be booked as a delegate for Congress to attend the AGM. Each Institutional Member (i.e. a university or department that subscribes to the EPC) is entitled to nominate up to three Council Members who are entitled to vote at the AGM. All individual EPC members and one senior representative per each EPC partner organisation are welcome to attend as observers. See the [EPC website](#) for the formal notice of the AGM. The AGM will be considering who should be the next EPC Vice President, President Elect and potential hosts for the 2024 EPC Congress. See more information on this in the opportunities section below.

### **EVENT: 2022 GEDC INDUSTRY FORUM**

The 2022 GEDC Industry Forum: Developing the next generation of engineering experts and leaders, have a great line up of events coming up in 2022. They are running online webinars to explore ideas in greater detail with their global audience. To get involved and hear from private sector and education-based engineering and technology experts there are several upcoming webinars on the 15<sup>th</sup> June, 14<sup>th</sup> September and the 12<sup>th</sup> of October. There will also an in-person workshop held in Cape Town, South Africa (alongside the [2022 WEEF-GEDC conference](#) from 28<sup>th</sup> November to 1<sup>st</sup> December 2022. See more details and how to attend these events [here](#).

## **In the news**

**REF 2021**

As you will be well aware, the results of the latest Research Excellence Framework (REF), the UK's system for assessing the excellence of research in higher education institutions, were published on 12<sup>th</sup> May.

Research from 157 UK universities was assessed and submissions included 76,132 members of academic staff, 185,594 research outputs and 6,781 impact case studies. The overall quality of submissions was judged to be 41% world-leading, 43% internationally excellent, 14% recognised internationally and 2% recognised nationally – recognising that UK higher education research is some of the very best in the world.

An important element for REF 2021 was the inclusion of all staff with a “significant responsibility” for research, this increased the number of staff considered by 46% compared to the previous REF. The 2015 Stern review meant the REF 2021 panels received a more representative sample of research output and provided more attention to research impact and the research environment. REF found that research produced by early career researchers, staff who took leave for family or other reasons were rated equally high in this year's assessment.

As we all know, REF is particularly important as it is used to inform the allocation of the public funding invested in research annually and from the results, we can see that engineering performed well overall with the average quality profile (FTE weighted) showing 89% of submissions met the standard for 4-star (world-leading: 40%) or 3-star (internationally excellent: 49%) research and a national GPA of 3.28, with 7432.39 FTE staff submitted.

Access a more detailed breakdown of the key points of interest arising from REF 2021 [here](#), summary data for the engineering unit of assessment [here](#), or see the full results and other publications on the [REF 2021 website](#).

We're also delighted that Prof Sarah Spurgeon, Engineering Sub-panel Member and Interdisciplinary Advisor for REF 2021, [has written a blog specially for the EPC](#) reflecting on what we've learned from this REF round.

### **TOO MANY FIRST CLASS DEGREES?**

The Office for Students (OfS) has announced they will be cracking down on “unmerited” grade inflation. They have used an algorithm to predict which degree classification students should attain based on prior entry qualifications, race, socio-economic status, gender, disability status and so on - terming these “observable factors”. OfS explained that deviation from this benchmark may put “credibility, value, and reliability of the qualifications” in danger and may damage the reputation of English HE. This has all come from the data they published on the 12<sup>th</sup> May which showed that 84.4% of students achieved a first or 2:1 at undergraduate last year – a huge increase from the 67% seen in 2010/11. The OfS have addressed that 2020 and 2021 were unprecedented years due to the COVID pandemic, something that will be in many of our minds when looking at this data, however they have argued that measures including No Detriment policies are not responsible for the increase. They state that nearly “six in ten first class degrees are unexplained” with these rising for all students regardless of entry qualifications. Susan Lapworth (interim OfS chief executive) stated that “Unmerited grade inflation is bad for students, graduates and employers” and that degrees should represent “an accurate assessment of achievement, with credible and reliable qualifications which stand the test of time”. Read OfS's report [here](#) and/or their press release [here](#).

## A HIGHER EDUCATION BILL

The Queen's Speech, delivered by the Prince of Wales on the 10<sup>th</sup> May, brought to light what legislation was in store for the 2022/23 Westminster parliamentary session – including news of a Higher Education Bill. The Prince of Wales stated that “Reforms to education will help every child fulfil their potential wherever they live, raising standards and improving the quality of schools and higher education” referring to the Schools Bill and the Higher Education Bill. The latter is to operationalise the decisions made after the higher education reform and lifelong loan entitlement consultation responses are considered (these consultations were both closed early this month). The bill will also concern OfS tackling low-quality courses, with the briefing having some pointed language on this point suggesting the bill will “tackle uncontrolled growth of low-quality courses by taking specific powers to control numbers of students entering higher education at specific providers in England”. Read the speech [here](#) and/or the full briefing [here](#).

## LATEST CaSE BRIEFING: Unlocking the potential of PSREs

CaSE published their latest briefing this month on *Unlocking the potential of public sector research establishments (PSREs)* – this briefing synthesises over 30 PSRE's views on their important role in the UK's research and innovation system; the strengths and challenges facing them; and how the government and research sectors can utilise them better to unlock their potential. CaSE is currently aiming to ensure the UK makes the most out of the increase in the public R&D budget by recommending that the investment should be underpinned by a strategy which “prioritises coordination and collaboration across government, academia and industry”. The report recommends a focus on those currently underrepresented in this, such as PSREs, suggesting that the government should improve its understanding of PSREs and recognise them as a significant public asset. CaSE argue that PSREs need more sustainable funding; changes to governance and stronger partnerships with policy teams to thrive. Find out more and access the full briefing [here](#).

## UNIVERSITIES UK: Attracting and retaining international talent report

Universities UK have recently published their [\*Attracting and retaining international talent report: Priorities for immigration reform across different career stages\*](#). The report explains that the government needs universities to support their drive to maintain the UK's position as a global superpower in science and innovation. The report argues that for this to take place the UK needs to recruit the best talent from across the globe and explained there will need to be an additional 150,000 researchers and technicians by 2030 if we are to reach the government's R&D targets. The report highlights that international staff make significant contributions to science and innovation in the UK – with the highest proportion of them currently working in engineering and technology. Overall, the report explores why the UK is attractive for researchers from across the world and how the government can continue to attract international talent. Read more and access the full report on the [Universities UK](#) website.

## Consultations

### LEVELLING UP

You'll be aware that the Government's “Levelling-up” white paper presents a mission-oriented approach in which 12 missions are presented as targets to be achieved by 2030. Universities are barely discussed in this paper, only referred to as anchor institutions and partners. There appears to be no central role for universities in this levelling-up proposal and no commitments outlined regarding access to HE as a means to levelling-up. Of particular importance to engineering are the missions relating to research and development. Although there is no official consultation as such

associated with this white paper – the EPC Board is nevertheless currently considering content of a representative EPC response and the form it should take. Access the levelling up white paper [here](#).

## Opportunities

### **STAND FOR ELECTION... as the EPC's Vice President & President Elect**

You can stand for election as our new Vice President & President Elect (one position), or as a member of the Board (on which four elected positions will become vacant). Elections will be held at the AGM on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2022. See full details and a nomination form in the formal notice of the AGM [here](#).

### **CONGRESS 2024: coming soon to your university?**

We are inviting applications to host our Congress event in 2024. More details will be available soon on the EPC website and via email, about how you can grab the opportunity to showcase your department, university and town to the must-attend event for the UK's engineering academic community.

### **RAEng ENGINEERING ETHICS AUDIT: views of UK engineers and technicians needed**

The RAEng are looking for engineers and technicians working in the UK to share their views in a new survey on engineering ethical practice to gain a more comprehensive view of the lived experience of ethics in engineering. The survey is part of the RAEng's Engineering Ethics Audit – one of the actions which came out of the [RAEng/Engineering Council engineering ethics report](#) released earlier this year. This audit of current engineering ethical practice and cultures is one of the steps RAEng are taking to support ethical engineering leadership and behaviour across all parts of the engineering community. The survey is open to response until the **31<sup>st</sup> May** and is accessible [here](#).

### **PEARSON HE INNOVATE AWARDS FOR TEACHING, LEARNING AND STUDENT SUPPORT**

Submissions are now open for the Pearson HE Innovate Awards for teaching, learning and student support 2022. They are inviting academics from across UK and Irish HE to send in a short summary of a project or initiative addressing one of five categories; recognising innovative approaches to developing employability skills; engaging students using education technology; supporting students; bringing inclusivity and sustainability into the classroom; and finally impactful use of Pearson digital courseware and services. Pearson are looking for projects showing originality, transferability and those that deliver positive outcomes for students. Project summaries must be submitted by **15th July 2022 at 11.59pm**. The winners will be revealed at the HE Innovate Awards Ceremony on 8th December 2022. Find out more and submit your entry [here](#).

### **FAREWELL AND THANK YOU WISHES**

As you may know, after 17 years (!), we will be saying goodbye to Vicky Elston at the start of June after she finishes her position as the EPC's incredible administrative manager. Please share your farewell wishes via the *Thankbox* we have set up [here](#). The deadline for this is the **31<sup>st</sup> May**.



Follow us on twitter [@EngProfCouncil](#)

And join our LinkedIn community [Engineering Academics' Network | Groups | LinkedIn](#)



Engineering Professors' Council Registered Office: Brooks Green House, Brooks Green Horsham West Sussex RH13 0JN Company Registration Number 06791295  
Patrons: Professor Dame Ann Dowling OM DBE FREng FRS Professor Lord Alec Broers FREng FRS Kt DL Professor Julia King, the Baroness Brown of Cambridge DBE FREng Sir John Parker GBE FREng Sir William Wakeham FREng Sir Peter Williams CBE FRS FREng