



CODH statement on the Government's Augar Review response and plans

Introduction

The [Council of Deans of Health](#) represents 101 university faculties engaged in education and research for the nursing, midwifery and allied health professions with almost all UK-domiciled students of these courses studying at one of our members. At any one time our members are teaching 175,000 students, the future healthcare workforce of the NHS, private and charitable sectors.

The 2018 Augar Review, which reported in 2019, raised fundamental questions on the nature of Higher and Further Education in England. With a response now forthcoming, the Council of Deans of Health has been able to look across the wide-ranging issues it raises and offers a statement and summary of key policy highlights below.

Statement

Responding to the Government announcements in light of decisions made following the Augar Review, Dr Katerina Kolyva, Chief Executive of the Council of Deans of Health said:

“The Council of Deans of Health welcomes the greater clarity and certainty the Government response to the Augar Review now offers after a long wait. While many of our university members will be happy there was no uncompensated fee cut, the freeze does present challenges as inflation sees them being expected to deliver the same level of quality education with less resource.

With this in mind, it was very positive to see the Government's explicit prioritisation of courses that support the NHS being backed up with a plan for the Office for Students to continue to channel funding to these priority programmes. We look forward to working closely with the OfS and Government on the details of this. We will also be happy to work with the OfS on highlighting student outcomes, our members have positive experiences to share, but we hope this will not be burdensome and add further red tape to the primary job of education our members do.

Healthcare has a strong record for social mobility and lifelong learning, upskilling those in current roles and bringing people into these professions following previous careers. The Lifelong Learning Entitlement being brought in for 2025 is good news and we will be feeding into the consultation. The promotion of the Further Education route is an important complement to the Higher Education one and we are keen to avoid pitting them against each other. Both are valid paths and we want to see better collaboration across Higher and Further education with strong Government ambition for both.

The new student loan terms for the student intake of 2023/4 will see them only paying back the amount they borrowed plus inflation *but* also facing a longer loan period of 40 years, up from 30, and at a lower salary threshold for repayment of £25,000, down from £27,000. This would see the average graduate nurse now starting to repay their loan from month one of the job unless salaries also rise accordingly, so there is a possible mixed picture here and we will need to work with Government and health and education sector partners to ensure this does not negatively impact recruitment.

We will continue to work on our sector's strong commitment to social mobility and widening participation so have questions over the possibility of minimum grades for student finance but welcome that this will be consulted on as there is a range of views on this across our membership. We do agree with the Government that post-qualification admissions was not the best way to promote access so are glad the huge disruption this would cause has been fully ruled out. We will want to look into the details around plans for foundation courses as these can be important routes for under-represented students and need funding accordingly.

There is lots to still digest and many questions remaining but the Council of Deans of Health welcomes this first step. We look forward to working with the Secretary of State and Ministers to deliver for our members, students and the public we serve."

Some key policy highlights

Fees and funding

- The fee cap in England will remain frozen at £9250 not reduced as originally recommended in the Augar Review
- Suggestion foundation course fees will be reduced but the route itself will not scrapped
- £900m new investment in HE £750m of which is for new facilities and teaching with a role for the OfS in distributing to key priority courses which includes ones that support the NHS

Loans

- Interest rate on borrowers from 2023/24 onwards will be inflation only but this is not retrospective, current loans will remain on the terms agreed
- The loan repayment threshold will be reduced to £25k down from £27k (rising with inflation from April 2027). This will also not be retrospective and will start with the 2023/4 intake
- The loan term will go up from 30 to 40 years – again only applying to the 2023/4 intake onwards
- A consultation on minimum grades to access student finance with a suggested requirement of a minimum of 2 grade Es at A-level and/or passes in GCSE English and Maths
- National State Scholarship fund of £75m to back up access

Lifelong Learning Entitlement

- Consultation on a new lifelong loan entitlement to be brought in for 2025 – with an allowance for everyone to have the equivalent of 4 years university education to be used throughout someone's life, particularly in the context of retraining and upskilling
- Higher Technical Qualifications will be put on par with degrees for student finance from 2023/24- feeding into the explicit aspiration to bring HE and FE together

Regulation

- Consultation on course quality and Office for Students reform
- Transparency in course advertising from next year with a call for HEIs to be able to show how many students completed a course as well as whether they went on to employment/study
- All plans for a Post-Qualification Admissions (PQA) model have been scrapped indefinitely

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