

## [Student Futures Commission: Methodology & Acknowledgements](#)

The UPP Foundation was created in 2016 by University Partnerships Programme (UPP), the leading provider of on campus student accommodation infrastructure and support services in the UK. The UPP Foundation is a registered charity that offers grants to universities, charities and other higher education bodies.

The UPP Foundation – a charity that aims to tackle the biggest issues facing the higher education sector across the UK – has established the Student Futures Commission in partnership with Shakespeare Martineu, Group GTI, and Wonkhe.

The terms of reference for the Commission can be [found here](#).

The Commission has brought together a group from across the higher education sector, students and students' unions, experts from secondary education, graduate employment and representatives from the charity and voluntary sector.

Along the way, we have commissioned and published a series of blogs, on issues ranging from [drug use](#) on campus to the [future of student employability](#), as well as ongoing [reflections of our oral evidence sessions](#). These pieces can be read on the Student Futures Commission website [here](#)

The Commission gathered evidence from the sector and students in a variety of ways between May 2021 and December 2021.

**This document contains the further details about that process, as well as a full list of acknowledgements for those who gave evidence.**



## 1. Polling of students in higher education

We commissioned two polls which were sent out and responses gathered via Group GTI's Cibyl database of 1.5 million UK students from 140+ universities across all year groups, ethnicities, gender, sexuality and socio-economic profiles. Cibyl were used as a research partner, to support with research design, survey programming, responses collection and data processing.

The [May 2021](#) poll surveyed 2,147 university students from across the UK between 14th-19th May 2021. This data was unweighted.

The [October 2021](#) poll surveyed 2094 university students and recent graduates from across the UK between 28th October and 4th November 2021. This data was weighted by gender and international status combined, and used HESA (Higher Education Statistics Agency) for the population numbers for full-time UK students.

A full list of questions and results can be found in the links above.

## 2. Oral Evidence Sessions

The Commission ran three formal evidence sessions - a summary of each session and a link to the session transcript, as well as a list of experts who contributed, can be found below.

### **Teaching and Learning Oral Evidence Session - 18th June.**

*A summary and transcripts is available [\[here\]](#):*

#### **Session 1 – Transitions to Learning**

- Rae Tooth – CEO Villiers Park and Co-Chair of the Fair Access Coalition
- Dr Paul Redmond – Director of Student Experience and Enhancement, University of Liverpool
- Professor Sue Rigby – Vice Chancellor, Bath Spa University
- Professor David Phoenix – Vice Chancellor, London South Bank University

## **Session 2 – Future of teaching and learning**

- Dr Liz Marr – Pro Vice-Chancellor (Students), Open University
- Vicki Stott – Incoming Chief Executive, QAA
- Sam Sanders – Director & Advisory Lead for Higher Education, KPMG
- Professor Tansy Jessop – Pro-Vice Chancellor (Education), University of Bristol
- Professor Danielle George – Associate Vice President Blended and Flexible Learning, University of Manchester

### **Student Experience and Wellbeing - 9th July**

*A summary and transcripts are available [\[here\]](#)*

## **Session 1 - Student support and wellbeing**

- Dominic Smithies – Student Voice and Equality Lead, Student Minds
- Dr Camille Kandiko Howson- Associate Professor of Education, Imperial College London
- Jo Midgley – Registrar and Pro-Vice Chancellor, Student Experience, University of the West of England (UWE)
- Mhairi Underwood- Head of Student Voice and Diversity, The Student Roo

## **Session 2 - Student experience and engagement**

- Professor Jane Robinson – Pro-Vice Chancellor, Engagement and Place, Newcastle University
- Professor Jonathan Grant – Professor of Public Policy, Policy Institute, King's College London
- Ben Vulliamy – CEO, University of York Students' Union
- Hattie Tollerson – SU President, London South Bank University
- Amatey Doku – Consultant, Nous Group

## **Employment & Employability - Friday 8th October**

A summary is available [\[here\]](#). This session was hosted in person at the University of Birmingham.

### **Session One:**

- Professor Kathy Armour - Pro Vice Chancellor, Education: University of Birmingham
- Colin Chapman - Deputy Dean of the College of Business and Social Science, Aston University Business School
- Professor Sir Chris Husbands - Vice Chancellor, Sheffield Hallam University
- Dr Joe Marshall - Chief Executive, National Centre for Universities and Business
- Henri Murrison, Director, Northern Powerhouse Partnership.

### **Session Two:**

- Elaine Boyes - Executive Director, Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services
- Professor Geoff Layer - Chair, Disabled Students' Commission
- Dr Mark Peace - Director of the RISE Programme, Manchester Metropolitan University
- Natasha Porter - CEO Unlocked Graduates

## **3. Call for Written Evidence**

The Commission opened a public call for written evidence between the 25th May 2021 and the 9th July 2021. This invited responses from higher education institutions, organisations working in the higher education sector as well as students, student bodies and other stakeholders.

A copy of the Commission's Call for Evidence can be found [\[here\]](#)

We received 40 pieces of formal written evidence. including evidence from 10 universities, 9 students' unions from a broad spectrum of institutions, and 20 sector

organisations including the OIA, UUK, JISC and UCAS. Where these have featured in the report, we have provided a public link to the document which was submitted to the Commission. A full list of contributors is available on request. We additionally received a number of ongoing research papers and other sector reports, including from the Russell Group and the office of the Children's Commissioner.

The responses welcomed the Commission's work and its central focus specifically on students and the student experience. The vast majority were related to the experience of students since March 2020 - July 2021, detailing how various elements of the student experience changed as a result of the pandemic.

A summary of written evidence can be viewed [\[here\]](#):

## 4. Survey of University Vice Chancellors

The Commission was keen to explore further the concerns and priorities of university and higher education institution leaders. This work was summarised in a piece for Wonkhe, authored by chair Mary Curnock Cook, available [here](#):

We received responses from 30 Vice Chancellors, who answered the following questions:

1. As a university leader what is the single most important focus for your institution in helping students to get back on track for success after the disruption of the pandemic? [for a comment given on the record]
2. What is most worrying you and your leadership team about getting your university and your students back on track for success after the disruption of the pandemic? [for a comment given off record]

We used quotes from this survey in our final report, some attributed and some given anonymously.

## 5. Sub-Commissions

Sub-Commissions, each led by a Student Futures Commissioner, allowed the Commissioner to explore key areas in further detail. This work was fed into and shaped the development and recommendations of the Commission's two formal reports.

### **Transitions - led by Commissioner Anne-Marie Canning & supported by the Brilliant Club**

Led by Hannah Thomson (Research & Evaluation Officer) & Julie Cummings (Public Affairs & Communications Officer) at the Brilliant Club, this roundtable explored further the question of how to facilitate the student transition to university post-Covid.

You can read the full report at

<https://thebrilliantclub.org/news/how-can-we-facilitate-the-student-transition-to-university-post-covid/>

*With thanks to attendees:*

- *Aimée Smith, PhD Candidate and Brilliant Club Tutor*
- *Anne-Marie Canning MBE, CEO, The Brilliant Club*
- *Dr Anton Machacek, Associate Director, Isaac Physics*
- *Becky Allen, Head of Transitions and Retention, University of Reading*
- *Billy Reed, Head of Student Experience, Engagement and Retention, SOAS*
- *Eireann Attridge, Programme Manager, The Elephant Group*
- *Jon Datta, Outreach Coordinator, Trinity College, University of Cambridge*
- *Maggie Gray, On Purpose Associate, Widening Participation Department, King's College London*
- *Meg Price, Student Futures Commissioner, UPP Foundation*

### **Employability - led by Commissioner Mark Blythe**

This group looked further at employability, including how career activation and work relevant learning could be integrated into the curriculum. This included an in depth review of work-integrated learning as a part of university education, including international comparisons and case studies. This research was used in the Commission's final report: A Student Future's Manifesto.

*With thanks to contributors:*

- *Professor Lisa Roberts - Vice Chancellor & Chief Executive, University of Exeter and Student Futures Commissioner.*
- *Stephen Boyd, Director, Careers & Employability at Manchester Metropolitan University*
- *Helen Smith, Director of Careers, University of Sheffield.*

- *Stephen Isherwood, Chief Executive, Institute of Student Employers and Student Futures Commissioner.*

### **International Students - led by Commissioner Professor Mary Stuart**

#### ***Co-chaired by Professor Mary Stuart and Amina Akugri, the International Student Futures Sub Commission Amina Akugri***

The pandemic has been challenging for all students but for international students, who travelled amidst the global pandemic and then lived in the UK, so far away from home at this very difficult time, the disruption and isolation caused has been especially acute.

The international student futures group held focus groups with 60 international students from 7 universities. It's report and recommendations, available to [read here](#), were published on the 31st January 2022.

*With thanks to contributors:*

- *Ruth Arnold, Consultant, Co-Founder, "We are International" campaign*
- *James Avison, Vice-President Education, Bangor University*
- *Rajkumar Chintakayala, Vice-President Postgraduate, Northumbria University*
- *Margarita Damai, Student Union Officer, London Metropolitan University*
- *Anne-Marie Graham, Chief Executive, UKCISA*
- *David Hawkins, Founder, The University Guys*
- *Louise Nicol, Founder, Asia Careers Group*
- *Obinna Okereke, Vice-President Education, Coventry University*
- *Liz Shutt, Director of Policy, University of Lincoln and the Greater Lincolnshire LEP*
- *Vivienne Stern, Director, Universities UK International*
- *Erez Van-Ham, Apply Board, Canada*
- *Toby Wilkinson, Vice Chancellor, Fiji National University*

## 6. Student Unions' Evidence Session

Chaired by Meg Price, and organised by Commissioner partners Wonkhe, the session gave students' unions the opportunity to share the evidence they had gathered to inform the commission. With thanks to:

**Dani Bradford, Hertfordshire SU; Lily Patrick, Leicester Students' Union; Ryan Ginger, City Students' Union; Rob Samuel, Student Voice Manager; Nick Glover, University of York SU.**

A video of the session can be found [\[here\]](#)

## 7. Student Focus Group - The Access Project

Chair of the Commission Mary Curnock Cook ran a focus group with Year 12 and Year 13 students who are part of the [Access Project](#), a charity which supports students from disadvantaged backgrounds to access top universities.

## 8. University Visits

The Commission visited three universities as part of its evidence gathering, to speak to staff and students at the start of the Autumn 2021 term.

### Queen Mary University London: 16th September 2021

- To discuss QMUL's approach to mixed mode education, with **Stefan Krummaker**, Deputy Vice Principal Education and **Janet De Wilde**, Director of the Queen Mary Academy
- To discuss QMUL's preparations for Welcome Week 2021, with **Sarah Cowls**, Director of Student and Academic Services, and **John Iveson**, Assistant Director Commercial Services
- To meet with Queen Mary Students Union, and **Adi Sawalha**, Queen Mary Students' Unions President 2021.



In addition, a private roundtable was held to discuss the initial recommendations of the Commission and how they related to the current higher education policy environment.

With thanks to contributors:

- Dr Diana Beech, CEO London Higher
- Emily Firth, Head of Policy and Public Affairs, Office of the Children's Commissioner

### **University of Birmingham - 8th October 2021**

- To discuss how the University had adapted its student experience and operations during the pandemic, with **Enita Suman**, Director of Accommodation and Operations, and Simon Bray, Director of Campus Services
- To discuss the Birmingham Scholar Framework, and the University's support for students from under-represented background, with **Jon Elsmore**, Director of Student Affairs
- To discuss how the University approach student employability and its employability offer, including hearing from participants in it's entrepreneurship programme, Elevate@TheExchange, led by **Etta Parkes Firth**, Director of Student Employability.
- A Q&A with students and recent graduates

### **Aston University - 8th October 2021.**

- To discuss Aston's approach to careers, work-based learning and student placements, led by **Colin Chapman**, Deputy Director of Aston University Business School.
- A tour of the Innovation Centre, with BSEen Project Manager **Carolyn Keenan** and some of Aston's current entrepreneurs.