

THE AUGAR REVIEW

What were the outcomes of the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding and what are the potential impacts?

The independent review of post-18 education and funding, known commonly as the 'Augar Review' concluded in May 2018. The panel's findings and recommendations were subsequently published in May 2019. In total, 56 recommendations are given under six headings:

- Skills (11 recommendations)
- Higher education (8 recommendations)
- Further education (14 recommendations)
- Apprenticeships (8 recommendations)
- Student contributions (7 recommendations)
- Maintenance (8 recommendations)

The core message of the review panel is that 'the disparity between the 50 per cent of young people attending higher education and the other 50 per cent who do not has to be addressed' and that, 'doing so is a matter of fairness and equity and is likely to bring considerable social and economic benefits to individuals and the country at large'.

It is not yet clear if the government will implement any or all of the recommendations from the review, or if they will have the support of the new Prime Minister. Augar argues that recommendations should not be 'cherry-picked'.

Who benefits?

[London Economics have compiled a comprehensive report](#) estimating the impact of the Augar Review on the Exchequer, higher education institutions, students and graduates. The primary 'winners' of the proposed fee cut are high earning (predominantly male) graduates. Conversely, the 'losers' are low earning (male) graduates and most female graduates. This is due to a combination of factors that allow these high earning males to repay their lower loan back quicker, due to paying less interest, whereas lower and middle earners will end up paying their loans back over a longer period.

Potential problems and implications

If the recommendations are implemented then a number of potential implications arise. The most critical are as follows:

- In line with the recommendations, will the government be willing and able to guarantee the additional public funding needed for universities if tuition fees are reduced to £7,500?
- A focus on 'low' vs 'high' value and 'strategically important' subjects suggests increased direction from OfS and the Government, impacting upon institutional autonomy.
- Recognising the need for proper investment in high-cost, strategically important subjects, must not lead to a scenario where other subjects are not adequately supported and become less available.



Augar is the first HE review since Robbins (1963) to consider both parts of tertiary education, Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE), together.



The headline from the review was the suggestion to reduce the tuition fee cap to £7,500 from 2021/22. It is recommended that the government teaching grant make up the shortfall for universities.



Loans would be provided as a 'lifelong learning allowance' for study at levels 4, 5 and 6, allowing greater flexibility for learners to take short courses and individual modules.



Maintenance grants would be reintroduced for socio-economically disadvantaged students.



Despite media focus on the headline tuition fee cut, much of the report is focused on recommendations to aid FE and ensuring that people can access pre-degree level qualifications, to enhance their income potential and fill economic skills gaps.



The OBR / ONS review on the treatment of student loans on the public finances was one of the reasons the Augar Review was delayed. [The review identified a 'fiscal illusion'](#), whereby the true cost of government borrowing to fund student loans was not captured transparently.



Despite the FE focus of the report, Education Secretary Damian Hinds has committed to not to play further education and higher education off against each other.

Related links:

[The Augar Review](#)

[London Economics: assessing the impacts of the Augar review](#)

[OBR: Student loans and fiscal illusions](#)

[Wonkhe: Augar coverage](#)

For more information contact:

[Bryony Victoria King](#) (Senior Policy Advisor)

[Pam Macpherson Barrett](#) (Head of Policy, Funding & Regulation)