

# HIGHER EDUCATION (INFORMATION) BILL

## EXPLANATORY NOTES

### What these notes do

These Explanatory Notes relate to the Higher Education (Information) Bill as introduced in the House of Commons on 24 June 2015 (Bill 21).

- These Explanatory Notes have been produced by Heidi Allen in order to assist the reader of the Bill and to help inform debate on it. They do not form part of the Bill and have not been endorsed by Parliament.
- These Explanatory Notes explain what each part of the Bill will mean in practice; provide background information on the development of policy; and provide additional information on how the Bill will affect existing legislation in this area.
- These Explanatory Notes might best be read alongside the Bill. They are not, and are not intended to be, a comprehensive description of the Bill. So where a provision of the Bill does not seem to require any explanation or comment, the Notes simply say in relation to it that the provision is self-explanatory.

## Overview of the Bill

- 1 This Bill is intended to improve the information available to prospective students on undergraduate courses. The Bill places a duty on a designated body to collect and publish information provided by universities, simplifying the process and reducing the number of organisations involved. It would establish consistent and comparable key information sets about all undergraduate higher education courses across England and Wales. The Bill seeks to create a more informed marketplace to assist prospective students in deciding where to allocate their resources.
- 2 Prospective students do have access to some comparable data currently but these are limited in scope and consistency and do not necessarily cover all information that, for instance, might be considered material for the purposes of applying consumer law. The Bill would also extend to institutions which, by virtue of not being in direct receipt of public expenditure, are not currently required to submit comparable information.

## Background

- 3 Trustworthy, consistent and comparable information can play an important role in helping support prospective students make choices between providers of higher education and decide where they might best direct their spending power, own resources and student loans. Requirements to be more transparent, especially in an environment of substantial tuition fees, are expected to promote accountability amongst providers. [Research and feedback](#) suggests a rising number of students believe their degree course to be poor value-for-money and, with hindsight, they regretted not researching key aspects about their options and choices before making decisions.

## Territorial extent and application

- 4 The Bill would extend to England and Wales.

## Commentary on provisions of the Bill

### Clause 1

- 5 Clause 1 establishes which entities must submit information for inclusion in a key information set; when they must do this; to whom the information must be submitted; and how it should be done.
- 6 The clause requires all providers of a first degree course of higher education to submit the information and data set out in detail in the schedule to the Bill.
- 7 The arrangements established make provision for a single "designated body" in England, and one in Wales, to be responsible for the process of collation and publication of the required information.
- 8 The clause also provides a power for ministers to amend the requirements for information to be submitted (set out in the schedule) by affirmative statutory instrument following public consultation.

### Clause 2

- 9 Clause 2 provides for the publication of guidance, following public consultation, by each
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designated body about the preparation and submission by higher education providers of the information detailed in the schedule.

### Clause 3

- 10 Clause 3 requires the Secretary of State to designate a body in England, and one in Wales, to be responsible for the collation and publication of the information and data referred to in Clause 1 and the guidance referred to in Clause 2.

### Clause 4

- 11 Clause 4 makes further provision about the publication and updating, by the designated bodies, of the information and data set out in the schedule.

### Clause 5

- 12 Clause 5 provides definitions of the key terms used in the Bill.

### Clause 6

- 13 Clause 6 is a self-explanatory technical clause which sets out the title of any Act arising from the Bill, when it would come into force and its territorial applicability.

### Schedule

- 14 The schedule sets out the detail of the institutional and course information that providers would be required to submit to constitute the key information set.

#### *Section 1*

- 15 Section one of the schedule sets out the required 'institutional information', which includes information about: the proportion of teaching staff with certain qualifications; spending on academic services; spending on student services; spending on widening access to higher education; costs and number of institution-owned residences; costs of nearby private accommodation; and complaints and complaint-handling.

#### *Section 2*

- 16 Section two sets out the required 'course information', which includes information about: teacher feedback; numbers of students continuing into a second year and of students moving to other institutions; student destinations (such as into employment of different kinds, further study or unemployment); average course fees; average additional costs; work placement data; number of students in receipt of a fee waiver or other award (in cash or kind) and the average amount of that award and average household income of students in receipt; details of the professional, statutory and regulatory bodies recognising the course; average salary of students who completed the course; number of hours of teaching on the course, broken down by size of 'class'; number of hours of private study expected each week; ratio of course assessment between coursework, written examinations and other methods; proportion of teaching on the course that is provided by an academic member of staff; and the number of UCAS tariff points achieved by students who studied on the course in the previous year.

## Commencement

- 17 Clause 6 states that the measures in the Bill will come into force on a date, or different dates for different purposes, that the Secretary of State may determine.

## Financial implications of the Bill

18 The Bill contains no provisions with direct financial effects.

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