

Accelerated Degrees

Response of the Association of School and College Leaders

Introduction

- 1 The Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) represents nearly 19,000 education system leaders, heads, principals, deputies, vice-principals, assistant heads, business managers and other senior staff of state-funded and independent schools and colleges throughout the UK. ASCL members are responsible for the education of more than four million young people in more than 90 per cent of the secondary and tertiary phases, and in an increasing proportion of the primary phase. This places the association in a strong position to consider this issue from the viewpoint of the leaders of schools and colleges of all types.
- 2 ASCL welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation as we can see the value of accelerated degrees for certain people in specific circumstances. We do however expect that the vast majority of young people who go through our school and college system will progress through the three year route to a first degree.
- 3 We consider the design principles that have been applied to be well thought out. There are a number of potential students for whom a significant reduction in costs will be attractive.
- 4 The association can understand how shortened degrees can form part of the portfolio and of HE in FE Colleges because of the potential for those seeking to enter employment in 2 years rather than 3 or 4 or for those seeking a degree whilst in employment. We agree with the statement in the consultation that accelerated degree will not necessarily replace 3 or 4 year degree programmes for more traditional undergraduates.
- 5 We consider that some employment sectors, such as business, retail, care, leadership and management, may be keen to recruit graduates as is the case with Foundation Degrees. However the demands of the shortened course on the student with a more concentrated study time may not be as enticing to the typical 18 year-old who wishes to go to university or college for the wider 'experience'.
- 6 Accelerated degrees, unless the tuition fee cap is lifted and the differential between the current 3 or 4 year tuition fees and the proposed fee for the shorter course is minimised would not be affordable for universities or colleges to deliver. Without this these shortened courses would, for the fee payer, simply become a cheaper version of a longer degree.
- 7 The fee structure would also need to take account of the fact that HEIs and FE colleges are likely to have increased delivery costs as teaching staff are likely to be required across the full year rather than just in the existing term structure.
- 8 ASCL can see that employers that sponsor degree courses for their employees such as Apprenticeship degrees may well be interested in their workforce becoming

graduates in 2 years rather than 3 or 4, with the fee, although important, not being the main driver.

- 9 We can see some potential advantages related to teacher supply for the use accelerated degrees. There may well be non-graduate Teaching Assistants that would consider teaching as a career but cannot afford either the time or money to go through a standard degree programme for whom an accelerated degree may be a welcome alternative, particularly if linked to Qualified Teacher Status.
- 10 So, in summary, ASCL believes that there are merits in the shortened degree route for the students who want one and for the employers who need graduates in their workforce. There are however also potential significant cost and employment issues for the HEIs that would deliver them.
- 11 I hope that this is of value to your consultation, ASCL is willing to be further consulted and to assist in any way that it can.

Malcolm Trobe
Deputy General Secretary
Association of School and College Leaders
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