

Response Form – Accelerated Courses and Switching University or Degree: Call for Evidence

We welcome responses to the questions below (any or all) as well as any other comments respondents may wish to make.

A copy of this call for evidence can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/accelerated-courses-and-switching-university-or-degree-call-for-evidence>

You can complete your response online at:

<https://bisgovuk.citizenspace.com/he/accelerated-courses-and-switching>

Alternatively, you can e-mail or post the completed response form to:

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The closing date for responses is 19 July 2016

Information provided in response to this call for evidence, including personal information, may be subject to publication or release to other parties or to disclosure in accordance with the access to information regimes. Please see page 8 of this call for evidence for further information.

If you want information, including personal data, that you provide to be treated in confidence, please explain to us what information you would like to be treated as confidential and why you regard the information as confidential. If we receive a request for disclosure of the information we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the department.

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Comments: [Click here to enter text.](#)

ALL OTHER INSTITUTIONS

Your details

Name: Click here to enter text.

Role: Click here to enter text.

Organisation: **Universities Association for Lifelong Learning (UALL)**

Telephone number: Click here to enter text.

Email address: Click here to enter text.

The Universities Association for Lifelong Learning (UALL) is committed to enhancing life-long learning in higher education and to the promotion of opportunities for mature students. This includes part-time, work-based and other forms of flexible provision that are highlighted in the White Paper (BIS (2016) *Success as a Knowledge Economy: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice*) as valuable elements in the lifetime learning to which the government commits itself. Our responses to the consultation are informed by these concerns.

Q1: What would the impact of a credit transfer system be on the higher education sector? *If you reference other sources in your answer please state the name of the source.*

Credit transfer has the potential for positive impact on opportunities for lifetime learning in higher education offering greater flexibility for adult learners on when, where and how they might pursue study. This in turn might foster participation in higher education with consequent impact on professional upskilling and personal development. It could be of particular value to adult students in face-to-face modes of learning whose careers require them to relocate so that continued attendance on their current programme becomes impossible.

Q2: By what mechanisms could a system of credit transfer be more effectively embedded across the sector? *If you reference other sources in your answer please state the name of the source.*

The context of this question is a consultation that is identified as being concerned with “switching university or degree”. To comply with the brief, this response does not address aspects of credit transfer which relate to the accreditation of prior learning outside of higher education, including non-certificated experiential and work-based professional learning. These are, however, critical components for adult students and hold the prospect of greater positive impact than an agenda which is narrowed to transfer of credit between institutions. They are also significant in any strategies for accelerated courses. For these reasons, UALL strongly urges policy-makers to broaden the scope of their thinking to include all forms of credit transfer

and accumulation, including recognition of prior certified as well as experiential and professional learning.

Credit frameworks, regional consortia and articulation agreements already exist to promote credit transfer. For discussion and examples of good practice see The Higher Education Academy (2013) *Review of credit accumulation and transfer policy and practice in UK higher education*.

For these approaches to be more effectively embedded the following, interconnected, changes are necessary:

- a policy, funding and cultural environment in which higher education is understood and promoted as a student-led, lifetime possibility rather than a single block of study delivered from a single institutional base;
- the establishment of national and ideally international rather than just local systems of credit transfer;
- increased demand for credit transfer.

A key element in increased demand is that structures for credit transfer need to be fair, transparent and easy to use from the perspective of the student. This involves:

- fluent, uncomplicated policies and procedures;
- clear, accessible communications;
- effective Information and Guidance.

Attention needs also to be given to issues of cost (especially significant if credit transfer is to support widening participation) and to ensuring that adult learners are not disadvantaged by unreflective application of rules about the shelf-life of qualifications except where there is clear academic justification for this stance.

Q3: What do you see as the main barriers to a more extensive credit transfer system? *If you reference other sources in your answer please state the name of the source.*

The following are factors that hinder the expansion of credit transfer:

- assumptions about HE as a single, one-off block of full-time learning rather than an educational experience that can be gained in stages and across a lifetime;
- the disciplinary, rather than student-led, definition of most undergraduate programmes in the UK;
- geographical and economic constraints which limit the scope for students from disadvantaged communities to travel to other than their most local HE provider;
- loyalty of students to the learning setting with which they have become familiar;
- differences in the extent to which HEIs with different missions perceive credit transfer to be an advantage or risk to their business.

Q4: Are there any lessons we can learn from international credit transfer models, e.g. from the US? *If you reference other sources in your answer please state the name of the source.*

In the US, it is an accepted part of the higher education environment that students may apply to transfer between institutions. This is supported by clear information on university websites for individual transfer applicants (e.g. <http://admissions.psu.edu/info/future/transfer/> <https://college.harvard.edu/admissions/application-process/transferring-harvard-college>) and by articulation agreements that provide a framework for credit transfer between programmes (e.g. <http://www.collegexpress.com/lists/list/four-year-schools-in-texas-with-articulation-agreements/2530/>)

This can be of particular value for widening participation and for lifetime learning by enabling students to begin their HE studies in a more locally based and accessible Community College and then progress to a public or private university for completion of a bachelors degree. It also potentially reduces the overall cost of achieving a degree. Progression to the most prestigious and selective universities is, however, intensely competitive and limited in scale.

Q5: What do you see as the barriers to more accelerated degrees being available?

The following are factors that hinder the development of accelerated degrees:

- assumptions about HE as a full-time, three-year programme with an extended break over the summer that continues patterns of learning established at school;
- loss of opportunity provided by extended breaks for work and other co-curricular experience that will enhance learning and employability;
- greater demands placed on students by more intensive patterns of study;
- loss of income from “holiday” jobs;
- lack of joined-up thinking in relation to higher and degree apprenticeships;
- challenges for institutions in terms of resourcing accelerated degrees (staffing, use of accommodation, potential loss of conference income) whilst also sustaining research;
- differences in the extent to which HEIs with different missions perceive accelerated degrees to be an advantage or threat to their business.

Q6: Where have you seen attempts (successful or otherwise) to overcome those barriers either in the UK or overseas?

The following are examples of accelerated degree programmes:

<https://bond.edu.au/future-students/study-bond/find-out-why-bond/accelerated-degrees>

<http://www.abertay.ac.uk/studying/accelerated-degrees/>