



Higher Education, Skills and Technical Education – A Post Covid 19 System for Quality Public Sector Services, Economic Recovery and Long-term Economic Success - UVAC Task and Finish Group

The Issue – Post Covid 19 the UK economy and society will face unprecedented challenges. The economy will be characterised by debt (both public and private) and higher unemployment. Employers may well be less inclined and less able to recruit new employees and invest in the training and development of their employees. The UK's productivity gap will remain a fundamental economic problem. There are likely to be calls for a prioritisation of public services, particularly the NHS, and for a greater role for Government intervention focused on the rebuilding and renewal of the economy. Fundamental to recovery will be ensuring those entering and, in the workforce, have the right skills to raise productivity in both the public and private sectors.

Skills and technical education are frequently seen as synonymous with the further education sector. They are not. While further education has and will play a pivotal role in a post Covid 19 skills system, HEIs and other partners have a fundamental role to play. Historically in England skills policy and programmes have been focused on lower level provision and on those not going on to university. Rightly, a post Covid 19 skills and technical education system will need to include a focus on those leaving school without 5 good GCSEs, plus Apprenticeship and technical education as the first step in gaining employment, together with equipping adults in level 2 and 3 job roles with the skills they need.

Equally importantly, however, a post Covid 19 skills and technical education system will need to ensure the public sector can recruit, train and develop individuals for the professions and occupations needed to deliver public services. In the private sector a focus will be needed on the development of the higher-level skills private sector employers need to rebuild and thereafter grow their businesses. While skills programmes need to encompass all levels, a key priority must be to develop a high skill, high productivity and high wage economy, including possibly by backing 'winning' sectors and the provision of world-class public services. Plans must not focus on a return to 'business as usual'. Old organisational systems, rules, terminology and practice that do not prioritise the development and delivery of the skills and technical education provision needed by the public sector and the economy in general must be reviewed and replaced.



Artificial barriers and policy, operational and funding silos that prevent or hinder higher education institutions, further education colleges, independent training providers, PSRBs and employers deliver the skills the economy and society need must be exposed and abolished. Systems and funding, while enabling competition, must not hinder collaboration. A post Covid 19 skills system MUST ensure providers of all types can deliver the skills and technical education individuals, employers and the post Covid 19 economy and society needs. This will require a range of programmes, pedagogies and providers.

Government and our partners will, in coming months, consider the options. This paper outlines the specification for a UVAC Task and Finish Group on the development of a higher education contribution to this debate and future skills and technical education system.

The **Task and Finish Group** will focus on the following:

To Review - The Challenge: the Economy and Society Post Covid 19. The issues, challenges and opportunities for a future skills and technical education system.

In the Context of the Above to Propose – A Vision for and the Objectives of the Skills and Technical Education Sector in Kick Starting and Supporting a Post Covid 19 Recovery and Long-term Economic Success.

Consideration will be given to the needs of:

- Employers – private/public, all sectors, large business/SMEs - productivity
- Individuals – all age, all levels – social mobility, progression, wellbeing, economic prosperity
- The State – productivity (in the private and public sector), social mobility, value creation and return on investment

The System – Existing and Potential New Policies, Programmes, Pedagogies, Infrastructure, Funding, Terminology and Quality/Oversight. Possible approaches to and the appropriateness of prioritising sectors; e.g. STEM and the public sector

Policy Principles for the Role of Government, Regions/localities and Employers and Individuals as Customers



The Focus and Priorities for Specific Programmes e.g. Apprenticeship, Higher Technical Qualifications and T Levels

The Role of Key Organisations including Competition, Collaboration and Partnership

Measuring Impact, Success and Quality

Milestones and Timescales

Publication of Task Specification - w/c 4 May

Call for Evidence on Apprenticeships, all forms of technical education, professional education, commercial programmes and short courses – w/c 11 May

Interviews with Partners, Employers and Individuals – w/c 18 May

Consultation Report – w/c 8 June

Final Report and Recommendations – w/c 22 June

Audience – HM Treasury, DfE, IfATE, OfS, ESFA, key employer groups and partner organisations.

Membership - UVAC is a Higher Education membership organisation. The research programme will reflect UVAC's ethos and roots as a Higher Education representative organisation. The research programme will, however, be conducted with other parts of the skills sector and reflect the reality that an effective skills system needs to fully engage the expertise of higher education, further education, independent training providers, PSRBs and Awarding Organisations. A Task and Finish Committee of UVAC Board members and member institutions will steer the review