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The Rt Hon Robert Halfon MP

Minister for Skills, Apprenticeships and Higher Education

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Professor Graham Baldwin
By email: vice-chancellor@uclan.ac.uk

Your ref: GB/40

22 June 2023

Dear Professor Baldwin,

Thank you for your letter from 24 May, regarding your concerns around the Police Constable degree apprenticeship (PCDA) and the alternative entry route currently in development.

It was great to read that UVAC and its members are strong supporters of our degree apprenticeship programmes and I would like to thank you for your continued provision of these. As I explained at the All-Party Parliamentary University Group, the success of the PCDA is very important to me and it is vital that there is a credible apprenticeship route into policing. Indeed, in February, during National Apprenticeships Week, I met a number of police constables in Greater Manchester who were successfully pursuing the degree apprenticeship.

As you know, entry criteria and training for new police constables is the remit of the Home Office (HO) and the College of Policing. Nevertheless, I would like to assure you that I hear your concerns about the PCDA and department officials are working with their HO counterparts to ensure that the apprenticeship route works effectively for candidates, providers, and police forces. I will also be meeting with the Minister of State for Crime, Policing, and Fire in the near future, and I will be strongly supporting the strengthening of police apprenticeships in these discussions.

I thought it would be helpful to set out some of the background to the decision taken by HO colleagues. It was in response to demands from the sector for greater flexibility to recruit those who do not have or want a degree, that the Home Secretary asked the College of Policing to build on its existing Policing Education Qualifications Framework (PEQF) by considering options for a new non-degree entry route. Following consultation with stakeholders, the College has started to develop a new non-accredited entry route, which will be licensed to forces and quality assured by the College.

In adding a new fourth entry route, the emphasis is on improving choice for potential applicants. The government remains committed to the existing PEQF routes, including the degree apprenticeship. I have been assured by the HO that the College of Policing is fully involving higher education (HE) institutions in discussions about the development of the new route and that they will continue to play a significant role in police training in future.

We recognise the investment made by the HE sector in recent years and understand that some institutions are concerned about the effect the new entry route may have on the take-up of the PCDA. Alongside the development of the new route, the Home Office will work closely with the College to ensure that forces continue to make improvements to the existing PEQF entry routes, and particularly the apprenticeship, to ensure that it operates in the best possible way for learners and for forces.

I believe that degree apprenticeships are, and continue to be, an important route to support productivity, social mobility, and widening participation. We want to further accelerate the growth of higher and degree apprenticeships and are providing an additional £40 million over the next two years to support degree apprenticeship providers to expand and help more people access this provision, on top of our £8 million investment in 2022-23.

Thank you for raising this important matter with me. I am grateful for the continuing excellent work UVAC and its members on degree apprenticeships more generally which, as you are aware, is a passion of mine.

Thank you also for your kind invitation to meet. Subject to my parliamentary duties, I would be delighted to accept. My office will be in touch to make the necessary arrangements, should my existing commitments allow.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert Halfon', written in a cursive style.

The Rt Hon Robert Halfon MP
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