

STATE OF THE NATION

Friday, 17th October 2025



Policy and Team Update

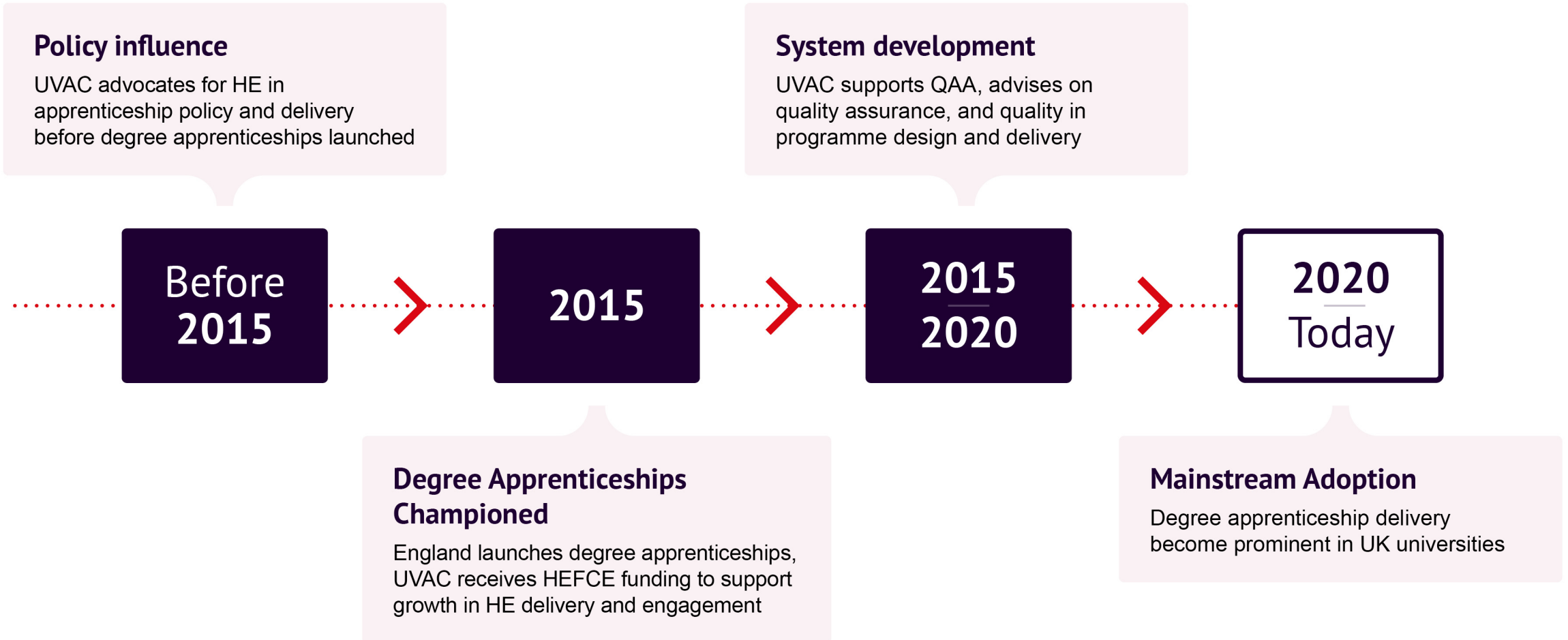
Dr Mandy Crawford-Lee, Chief Executive

UVAC
UNIVERSITY VOCATIONAL AWARDS COUNCIL

About UVAC



UVAC's Role in shaping apprenticeships in England



Welcome



Jeremy Swan – Head of Policy and Advocacy, The Association of Graduate Careers and Advisory Services (AGCAS)



Mandy Crawford-Lee – Policy

1. Members' Comms - POLL
2. Conference Take-aways
3. Education Committee
4. Apprenticeships and Skills
5. Post-16 Skills White Paper
6. UVAC Response



Rebecca Rhodes –UVAC Associate Director

1. Member Services Update



Final Words

1. Conference
2. HERA
3. CFO Toolkit
4. Next SoTN
5. Research Symposium

UVAC

SHAPING FUTURES TOGETHER

An introduction to AGCAS



The Association of Graduate
Careers Advisory Services

jeremy.swan@agcas.org.uk

ABOUT US

We're the representative body for careers and employability in higher education.

We support our members through managing sector quality standards, training and bringing together the community. We're their advocates in the wider world and feed intelligence back.

Who are our members? Probably you! The vast majority of UK and Ireland universities are members. We work closely with careers teams, but welcome all who contribute to graduate employability.



The Association of Graduate
Careers Advisory Services

jeremy.swan@agcas.org.uk

Supported by Impact Consulting



International Employability

unpacked >>>

Thursday 27 November
10am to 1pm



The Association of Graduate
Careers Advisory Services

jeremy.swan@agcas.org.uk

SHAPING FUTURES TOGETHER



LEADERSHIP
CONFERENCE
2026



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SHAPING FUTURES TOGETHER

- Employability is increasingly everyone's job
- What is employability?
- Need to reframe the debate around higher education
- Gathering evidence and case studies incredibly helpful

ACADEMIC EMPLOYABILITY AWARDS 2026

Recognising the academics turning
learning into lifelong employability

Now accepting entries

www.agcas.org.uk/AEA26



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POLICY

- Spanning England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Ireland
- More joined up approach to skills policy – with a distinct role for HE
- Combat idea of apprenticeships vs university – you can have both!
- Lifelong learning
- Defunding level 7 apprenticeships
- Backtracking on 1,000 careers advisers pledge
- TEF consultation
- Making Work Pay – unpaid internships
- Recognising the bigger picture – Westminster budgetary restrictions and political pressures.

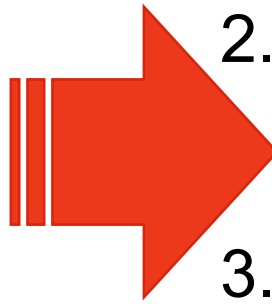
Thank you

jeremy.swan@agcas.org.uk



Member Poll...Member Poll...Member Poll...

Which source of information is your **PRIMARY** route for finding out about events, activities and news from UVAC?



Member Poll

Q

1.

• I look at the UVAC website pages

2.

• I have followed UVAC on LinkedIn so I read the posts

3.

• I read the Monday roundup newsletter

4.

• I read individual emails or posts sent directly to me

UVAC

Conference Take-Aways



- **Scrapping of 50% target** for young people ≤ 30 years old to university
- Introduction **'flagship pledge'** two-thirds into higher level skills (university, technical education (FE) or 'gold standard' apprenticeships) by age 25
- **'Youth Guarantee'** of training, work support or apprenticeship
- **14 new technical excellence colleges** + 25 TECs in construction and defence
- Investing of **£800M** ages **16-19** from 2026/27
- **Bringing together of FE and HE** in a joined-up post-18 education system for **L4 & L5 training** linked to priority skills

Conference Take-Aways

Conservatives & Lib Dems



- Doubling apprenticeship budget to **£6BN** by removing funding for 'poor value' degrees
- **Incentivising apprenticeships** for 18-21-year-olds



- **Reforming Skills England** to increase independence and accountability
- Requiring **WFD plans from regions** with devolved skills funding
- Introducing a **Skills and Training Account**
- **Skills Co-operatives**

Education Committee Observations and Recommendations

- Sixth report of Session 2024-26
- *“The **evidence** we heard was overwhelmingly **opposed to the Government’s decision not to fund level 7 apprenticeships for those aged 22 and over through the Growth and Skills Levy**”*
- Reduces uptake
- Limits career progression
- Widens existing skills shortages
- **Reinstate funding** for all ages in the eight growth-driving sectors and regulated professions
- **Widen support** for SMEs to navigate apprenticeships
- **Monitor the impact** and be willing to revisit/reintroduce funding in other sectors
- **Review** Skills England’s governance within two years

Apprenticeships and Skills...and Employment?

- July 2024-September 2025...What happened?
- 5 September Cabinet reshuffle
- DfE and DWP....skills, welfare and employment policies cojoined?
 - Bringing “skills work out of the DfE across the whole of government” & “Better Skills for Better Jobs”*
- DWP ‘Super Ministry’ linked to growth
- Fabian Society ‘Levying up: how to make the growth and skills levy work’
- Apprenticeship budget 99% spent

Post-16 White Paper

- Expected soon, consultation to follow
- AoC and UUK report: *Delivering a joined-up post-16 skills system*
- Incorporates the promised HE reform package
- New 'V-levels'
- Plan for the Growth and Skills Levy
- Relationship with the Lifelong Learning Entitlement
- Skills England relationship with HE and FE regulators, regional policymakers, industry bodies
- Delivery by HE of the five priorities: access, economic growth, civic engagement, quality and efficiency

UVAC Response

- Looking beyond higher and degree apprenticeships
- Levy should fund skills for growth and level 2 provision funded by general taxation
- Keep challenging outdated perceptions
- Need to repeat need for higher-level qualifications and training
- Be at the cutting edge of how levy is reformed, :
 - Expanding the scope of the levy to more employer
 - Introduce a government contribution to the levy
 - Consider individual contributions
 - Voter position – investment in apprenticeships popular
- Skills provision is not just an educational programme...!

Rebecca Rhodes – Associate Director

Member Services Update

17/1025



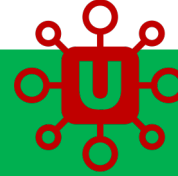
Knowledge Networks



Cross Network Impact

- Best Practice Sharing
- Rapid Policy Response
- Resource Development
- Member Engagement
- Research Opportunities
- Significant benefits and sector- wide improvements.
- Ongoing development and strategic expansion aligned with member needs and national priorities
- **UVAC 2025 Conference: Network workshops and stand for further collaboration and discussion**

Schedule: UVAC [Webpage](#) & LinkedIn



2025 Focus

- Continue to invest in existing networks, supporting regular sharing of practical resources, sector research, and peer learning
- Explore new networks in areas such as digital skills, green jobs, and employer-led delivery
- Maintain the focus on member engagement, collaborative resource development, and employer/sector partnerships
- Systematically evaluate impact and adapt network priorities to emerging needs and government policy

Webinars & Workshops Updated Schedule

NEW DATE	ORIGINAL DATE	WEBINAR
<u>Thur 23-Oct 9.30 -11.30</u>	No change	Preparing for On-Programme Apprenticeship Assessments - Authentic Assessment
<u>Thur 30-Oct 9.30 – 11.30</u>	No change	Making the Most out of Modular Content
<u>Fri 31 Oct 9.00 – 5.00</u>	No change	Sector Spooktacular
<u>Thur 06 Nov 9.30 - 11.30</u>	NEW Session	Becoming an LLE Provider –Early Application Lessons
<u>Tue 18 Nov 9.30 -12.30</u>	New Date	Effective Data Quality Management - Using PDSAT
<u>Thur 4-Dec 9.30 -11.30</u>	No Change	Embedding the New Role for Line Managers
<u>Wed 10 Dec 9.30 – 11.30</u>	New Date	Spatial Skills - Regional Skills & Partnerships
<u>Thur 15 Jan 9.30 – 12.30</u>	Provisional New Date (from Thur 06 Nov)	The new Ofsted Framework – Differences & Implications
<u>Thur 22 Jan 9.30 -11.30</u>	Provisional New Date (from Thur 13 Nov)	Learning from the Ofsted Pilots

Practitioner Workshop Update: [Register HERE](#)

First & Early Progress Reviews - **Wednesday 5th November**

- Practitioner Development Session – for Staff New to Progress Review Role
- Skills Scan for Tailored Content

Audience



- Case Studies
- Breakout Groups & Discussions
- Real Scenario Learning
- Shared Successful Practice

Design



- Personal Action Planning
- Ongoing support via BBX Content
- Tools & Resources Bank

Support



Sector Spooktacular: Friday 31st October [Register HERE](#)

- Course/Module Leads
- Business Development Leads
- Apprenticeship Leads
- Leadership Teams accountable for spatial and sectoral relevance for Ofsted, Local / Regional Skills Plans
- Workplace learning specialists looking to shape or expand their knowledge about sector priorities
- Planning leads
- Teams responsible for partnerships with employers

Audience



- Sector scope & definitions
- Data & analytical evidence base
- Sub-sector / thematic dives
- Key occupations, skills, workforce implications
- Planned Interventions
- Place / geography / clusters / regional prioritisation
- Opportunities for programme development, employer engagement,
- Checklist to assess current or planned skills provision

Content



- Stay informed on national priorities and policy direction
- Support strategic curriculum planning and review
- Inform employer engagement and coaches about sector priorities
- Build stronger links with employers and industry partners
- Identify opportunities to embed skills into modules and projects,
- Help learners achieve knowledge and capabilities valued by employers.

Benefits



Sector Spooktacular: Friday 31st October

[Register HERE](#) and with one link join multiple sessions

Session Schedule	Time
Advanced Manufacturing	9.00-10.00
Clean Energy Industries	10.00-11.00
Creative Industries	11.00-12.00
BREAK	12.00-1.00
Digital & Technologies	1.00-2.00
Financial Services	2.00-3.00
Life Sciences	3.00-4.00
Professional & Business Services	4.00-5.00

Final Word



Conference



HERA



CFO Toolkit



Next SoTN 30
January 2026



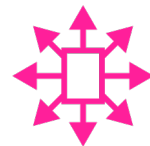
White Paper
Focus Groups

UVAC

NATIONAL CONFERENCE
Thursday 20 November 2025
ICC, Birmingham

*Change: creating and adapting to
apprenticeship and skills policy,
past, present and future*

SAVE THE DATE!

The graphic features a background of various geometric shapes in green, red, and grey, including a semi-circle, a square, a circle, and a cluster of dots.

Symposium 30 April 2026

*Work-based learning: forging
pathways between theory and
practice in higher education* Call for
Papers

Thank you

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