



Chartered Institute of  
Library and Information  
Professionals

## **Department for Business Innovation & Skills: Higher Education - Students at the Heart of the System**

### **Introduction**

1. The Chartered Institute of Library & Information Professionals (CILIP)<sup>1</sup> welcomes the opportunity to comment on the proposals in the Higher Education White Paper. We are responding both as a professional body with a large number of members working in higher and further education, and as an accrediting body for Library and Information Studies courses in higher education. Our remarks on the latter are dealt with at the end of this response.
2. There are a number of things that CILIP welcomes in the White Paper. These include the focus on students, the commitment to give teaching a similar status to research and the affirmation of the Robbins principle that "...courses of higher education should be available for all those who are qualified by ability and attainment to pursue them and who wish to do so", although we note the worrying qualification, "subject to expenditure constraints" (paragraph 19). However in welcoming these things we are less convinced that the proposals in the White Paper will actually deliver them. We are also anxious about the absence of an overall vision or purpose for higher education, its broader links to the information society and the knowledge based economy and the sparse attention given to learning and higher education's part in the overall learning environment and the development of lifelong learners and critical thinkers.
3. Lord Dearing, in his report on higher education, asserted: "Over the next 20 years, the United Kingdom must create a society committed to learning throughout life. ....Education is life enriching and desirable in its own right. It is fundamental to an improved quality of life in the UK".<sup>2</sup> In our view this vision still holds true and is a necessary foil to the consumerist approach to quality adopted in the White Paper. Within higher education libraries much has been

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<sup>1</sup> The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) is established by Royal Charter and is the professional body for library and information professionals in the UK. It has around 18,000 members working in all parts of the UK economy.

<sup>2</sup> Dearing, R (1997) *Higher Education in the Learning Society: Report of the National Committee* London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office/The National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education.

achieved through collaboration across institutions, which benefits not only the institution's own users, but also the broader community, including independent learners and the general public, as well as visiting academics and students from other institutions. This collaborative approach often produces cost savings and is consistent with the public good requirement of those higher education institutions that are charities. We are concerned that the heavy emphasis put on competition in the White Paper may impede this collaborative approach and do not want to see a return to the 1980s when many HE institutions put up barriers to others using their resources in the name of competitive advantage.

4. Our comments below expand on some of these broader themes. They also illustrate our belief that libraries and information services are an integral part of teaching and learning within higher education institutions and have a significant impact on the quality of the learning environment and learning outcomes. This is certainly the view of students as reflected in the National Students Survey<sup>3</sup>, and we recommend that this is reflected also in those White Paper proposals regarding the student experience and to the regulatory underpinning that will be put in place to ensure quality teaching and learning. In this response we have grouped our remarks mainly under the headings used in the summary of policies in the White Paper's Executive Briefing, but have also added a section on Diversity reflecting the chapter in the White Paper. The final section deals with CILIP's role as an accreditation body for Library and Information Studies.

## **Financing students**

### **The Impact of the new funding arrangements on students and universities**

5. CILIP welcomes the extension of loans to part-time and distance learning students. Libraries and information services are committed to supporting institutional and sectoral aims in widening participation and social mobility and have been innovative in their delivery of services to students studying by non-traditional modes. However CILIP, like others, is concerned that an increase in fees will act as a further deterrent to participation in HE for students from disadvantaged backgrounds who may be particularly debt adverse.
6. We are also concerned that, whereas the Russell Group universities, and some of those focusing on providing low cost HE, will prosper, a "squeezed middle" of universities will suffer. This will include the institutions that have done the most to promote widening participation and access to learning resources. And just as there will be winners and losers amongst HE institutions, so too there will be winners and losers amongst academic disciplines. Those subjects with a perceived low employability factor will lose out and become the preserve of a wealthier clientele. This will become even more the case if new entrants to HE provision "cherry pick" only the most popular or profitable subjects, making the current broad provision of HE less sustainable. "Cherry picking" risks narrowing the curriculum and reducing diversity of choice.

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<sup>3</sup> See paragraph 19

7. CILIP is interested in the funding of universities because the health of the library is dependent on the health of the parent institution. Poorer funding for libraries means less capacity to meet demands and to contribute to the wider learning environment. HE libraries currently play a fundamental role in developing key transferrable skills, such as digital literacy, information and media literacy and independent study and research skills. We are concerned that the new funding system will lead to instability and abandonment of these key initiatives that are so important for the development of future generations of learners and researchers.

### Further Education

8. CILIP welcomes the recognition of the contribution of further education to the provision of higher education and supports the expansion of higher education in further education, as this will increase choice and flexibility. However, current experience suggests that FE provision works best when done in partnership with HE, where resources can be shared. We are concerned that competition between institutions will hinder this, resulting in inadequate provision of information services in some FE providers.
9. We understand that it is the Government's intention for students over 24 studying FE learning and training at level 3/4 or above to have access to loans by 2013/14.<sup>4</sup> Whilst we welcome this extension of loans to FE students, we are concerned that, if these students are graduating from FE courses with high levels of debt, they will be deterred from taking on additional loans should they choose to progress from FE to HE.

### The removal of unnecessary regulation

10. CILIP welcomes the Government's commitment to "removing unnecessary regulations", such as VAT charges that prevent institutions from gaining efficiencies by sharing costs. On a broader issue, we note that VAT is charged on electronic information resources, currently a significant drain on the resources of HE libraries, but not on print resources. It is our strong view that no knowledge should be taxed, and we would welcome the removal of VAT from learning resources used across education.
11. CILIP would also like the Government to implement the recommendations of the Hargreaves review of intellectual property<sup>5</sup>, as this would enable university libraries to provide improved access to learning resources. We welcome the Government's response and commitment to Hargreaves and look forward to seeing this put into effect in the shortest possible time.

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<sup>4</sup> Department for Business Innovation & Skills (2011) *New Challenges, New Chances*, pp14-16

<sup>5</sup> Hargreaves, I (2011) *Digital Opportunity – A Review of Intellectual Property and Growth*. UK Intellectual Property Office

## Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC)

12. We note provision in the White Paper for any remaining teaching grant to be prioritised, and we would support the continued funding of JISC from this source. JISC is at the forefront of developing technologies necessary to enrich and extend learning opportunities. This has included a number of library based activities that have benefitted the users of all academic libraries, especially those activities relating to open access to information.

## Improving the student experience

13. CILIP supports the Government's goal of improving the quality of students' academic experience and increasing their educational gain. However, as libraries are integral to teaching and learning and impact on quality, we are disappointed that recognition is not given to the important contribution that libraries and their staff make to the achievement of this goal. Recent research into the correlation between library usage and degree classification has found that students who read more, measured in terms of borrowing library books and accessing electronic resources provided by the library, achieve better grades.<sup>6</sup> Steps should be taken to ensure that adequate funding is guaranteed to ensure that libraries in all institutions are adequately resourced and can continue to provide students with access to the range of information resources they need to succeed in their courses. Libraries and the services they provide should be key to any assessment exercise of HE provision and measuring the provision of service to learners and researchers.
14. Whilst we welcome the recognition that "a good student...will actively draw on all the resources that a good university or college can offer" (paragraph 3.1), we believe that the White Paper lacks vision for how learning takes place, and fails to recognise learning experience in its broadest sense. There is too great a focus on teacher contact time, with inadequate recognition of how independent learning, and a commitment to lifelong learning, is supported and developed. Libraries and their staff deliver services to support a variety of learning styles and activities, course delivery methods and attendance patterns, thereby ensuring access to the UK and international knowledge base. Professional librarians in HE support teachers in the development of students as independent learners, incorporating information literacies and digital literacies into the curriculum, as well as enabling access to a broad range of intellectual resources, both digital and paper based. Hence, they make an invaluable contribution to the development of a workforce that has the skills to think critically, learn, innovate and exploit new opportunities. The White Paper's vision of a student as "not simply a consumer of other people's knowledge" (paragraph 3.1) needs to be underpinned by adequate recognition of the role of libraries and information services in teaching and learning and the development of students as confident, independent learners prepared for

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<sup>6</sup> Goodall, D and Pattern, D (2011) "Academic library non/low use and undergraduate student achievement: A preliminary report of research in progress", *Library Management*, Vol. 32 Iss: 3, pp.159 - 170

the information and knowledge based workplace, as well as for their own ongoing personal development.

15. A key contribution of libraries and information services to teaching and learning is the development of information literate students. CILIP defines information literacy as, “knowing when and why you need information, where to find it, and how to evaluate, use and communicate it in an ethical manner”. This is a life skill as well as a learning skill and needs to be instilled at school so that students can fully participate in learning opportunities at HE. Ideally university should be a place to refine the skills acquired at school, but alas, in many instances, students start university with inadequate information literacy skills, so library and information service professionals have to teach the basics.
16. Learning is a continuum, starting from the early years through schools, colleges, universities and continuing to all stages of adult life. If the right skills are to be integral to the life experience of all human beings then it is vital that school and college libraries, as well as university libraries, are properly resourced and have qualified and skilled staff to teach and facilitate information literacy skills. CILIP intends to campaign vigorously for the need for school libraries with qualified librarians later this year.

#### Initial teacher training

17. If more schools are to lead their own teacher training it is important that teachers learn how to teach information literacy and prepare people for the information society. If a school is to become a teaching school, it must be able to demonstrate an understanding of the importance of information literacy to teaching. We have argued elsewhere that part of the criteria for registering as a teaching school should be the provision of a Library and Information Service (LIS) in the school.<sup>7</sup>

#### Key Information Sets

18. The White Paper recognises that the wider availability and better use of information for potential students is fundamental to the new system, and CILIP agrees with this. However, prospective students will not benefit from this additional information if they lack the necessary skills to make the best possible use of it. This is a further example of why information literacy skills need to be taught in schools.
19. CILIP welcomes the idea of empowering prospective students, their families, schools, employers and others by making a standard set of high quality information about courses and institutions available and enabling this data to be compared. Research by HEFCE identified the quality of library facilities as

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<sup>7</sup> Letter to the Chief Executive of the National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services, 21 March 2011

a key factor for students when choosing which university to attend<sup>8</sup>, so information about library resources should be transparent as this will help students to identify a suitable institution, as well as helping universities with well resourced libraries to market their courses.

20. CILIP agrees that it would be good practice for HE institutions to publish information about how student fees are being spent. Given the importance students attach to libraries and information services, universities should publish data about spend on these services. Libraries form a 'soft target' for many universities looking for cuts in spending, so transparency in this area is essential.
21. CILIP recommends that, alongside information about teaching qualifications, fellowships and expertise of teaching staff, HE institutions should be encouraged to anonymously publish information about the qualifications held by library staff. A library managed by qualified information professionals, with the support of para-professionals, is one of the most important facilities of any university. Appropriately qualified staff are essential to ensure that the library makes the fullest possible contribution to the goals of the university.

#### Student charters

22. CILIP would welcome student charters being made mandatory, and calls for standards relating to library and information service provision to be included. It is our belief that library and information services should be part of the regulatory structure and, as is the case with teaching, complaints about the standard of library provision should be a trigger for inspection. Students should be empowered to hold universities to account if library provision is inadequate. In addition, it should be made clear what a student can expect from their university library in terms of access to up to date learning resources, both electronic and paper based, as well as training and support in accessing and utilising these information resources.
23. It should be noted that, like staff in Student Services, Welfare Support and Students' Unions, library and information professionals in HE recognise their duty to look after their students, and as such the library plays a role in pastoral care.

#### Employer engagement

24. CILIP endorses the importance of a close relationship between universities and employers, as stated in paragraph 3.29. Through the development of skills in information literacy, digital literacy and media literacy, delivering – or partnering with others to deliver - literacy and numeracy training, and encouraging and supporting independent and lifelong learning, university libraries play an important role in developing students' employability skills.

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<sup>8</sup> Cited in "Securing a sustainable future for higher education in England", *Independent Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance*, October 2010

Confident, independent learners are precisely the type of people employers need. However, in endorsing this principle we believe that HE must be about more than just employability. We feel that the Government's statement "Higher Education is a good thing in itself. Students may study a subject because they love it regardless of what it means for their earnings" (paragraph 3.27) should be afforded greater prominence within its proposals.

### Enterprise and HE

25. Libraries and information services also play a key part in helping students gain the necessary skills and knowledge to develop into enterprising graduates, and we ask that the Government recognises this contribution. Increasingly, HE libraries are extending their training programmes to include topics such as the organisation, storage, sharing and retention of information. These competencies are increasingly recognised, not only among commercial and industrial employers, but also government and the third sector.

### A diverse and responsive sector

26. CILIP recognises that there is a place for some competition in HE, and for a greater choice of provider to be available. We accept that competition will, on occasion, wake up institutions that are coasting and provide new and innovative solutions to encourage learning. Although quality has to be the prime factor, we can see there are some advantages to decoupling of degree awarding powers and the provision of courses and note the model of the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA) in the past. However, it is important to ensure that HE covers the breadth as well as the depth of human knowledge and we have the following concerns about competition being the only, or predominant, model:

- The impact on existing and potential partnerships and collaboration in HE, especially between library and information service providers, which is for the benefit not only of individual institutions, but the whole student body and the wider public, especially the independent learner. CILIP believes that increased competition will threaten schemes such as Inspire<sup>9</sup> and SCOUNL Access.<sup>10</sup>
- The impact on subject provision. We fear that a narrower curriculum will end up being taught, with some subjects becoming the preserve of those who can afford them.
- Where competition is centred on price not quality the likelihood is that quality will suffer. There needs to be a robust and convincing

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<sup>9</sup> For details of the Inspire scheme see: <http://www.inspire2.org.uk/>

<sup>10</sup> For details of SCOUNL Access schemes see: <http://www.access.sconul.ac.uk/>

regulatory regime to offset this unwelcome result of competition. There must be a real quality threshold for new providers.

27. As with other parts of education, the proposals are lacking as to what will happen when bad providers are identified. What guarantees will be put in place to ensure no student suffers?

### **Improving social mobility through fairer access**

28. CILIP fully supports the Government's commitment to improving social mobility through fair access to HE. We also endorse the extra resources and powers proposed for OFFA. However, we share the concerns of many that higher fees may act as an additional barrier to participation and feel that OFFA should be required to undertake proper research into the impact of higher fees on take up of university places, especially by people from low income backgrounds.
29. We trust that the work of libraries and information services in making their services more accessible, and in providing additional support for students needing help with basic skills and IT skills, will be recognised by the Government. Widening participation has implications, not only for teaching departments, but also for libraries and information services, therefore LIS should be included in any access agreements sanctioned by OFFA and the profession should be involved in any national guidance over access agreements.

### **A new careers service**

30. The amount of information about HE and alternative career paths is bewilderingly large. A good careers service will need the input of specialists skilled in information management to help make this information more accessible to end users. It will be important to ensure that the proposed quality assurance framework for careers guidance and standards for the service, both incorporate provision for effective information management. Where schools or colleges deliver the careers guidance programme, this should be done in partnership with school and college library staff to ensure effective information management underpins the guidance service provided.

### **The impact of the White Paper on CILIP's role as an accrediting body**

31. CILIP accredits Library and Information Studies courses UK wide, so we await clarification as to how our relationship with the devolved nations will be affected by the proposals set out in the White Paper.
32. We welcome the inclusion of data in Key Information Sets regarding which courses are recognised by professional bodies. Unlike some professional bodies, CILIP does not publish its accreditation reports in full however, so we will give further consideration to how transparency over accreditation can be promoted.

## Quality assurance

33. There is a key role for professional bodies such as CILIP in quality assurance. Professional bodies are concerned with preparation for professional practice and, through the development of a Body of Professional Knowledge, ensure that students are employable. We look forward to clarity about the QAA's new functions so we can continue to contribute to an effective quality assurance mechanism.

## HEFCE

34. CILIP looks forward to the relationship between professional bodies and HEFCE being more clearly defined. We seek clarification as to how professional bodies are to feed back and influence HEFCE in its new role as lead regulator. CILIP has already reduced the burden on HE institutions and we hope this is recognised. We are concerned that too much de-regulation could impact on the reputation of English HE institutions overall however.

## Postgraduate study

35. Library and Information Studies is a primarily postgraduate discipline of great social and economic importance. CILIP accredits postgraduate courses at eleven English universities, and we share the concerns highlighted in the Browne Review that, in future, when graduates are contributing more to the costs of HE at undergraduate level, they may be less likely to participate in postgraduate study. This would hamper the introduction of key workers to the knowledge based economy and workplace; e.g. Information Managers, Knowledge Managers, Intellectual Property Managers, Records Managers, Archivists, Learning Advisers, as well as, School, Public and Academic Librarians. It also contradicts the government's commitment to widening access to HE.
36. There is currently little data available about who undertakes postgraduate study, and we welcome the Government's recognition of this, and its decision to ask HEFCE to consider what additional data should be collected about postgraduates.

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