



Department
for Education

Accelerated Degrees

Government consultation

Launch date 11 December 2017

Respond by 11 February 2018

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Introduction by Jo Johnson

An undergraduate degree studied at a Higher Education provider in England requires a significant investment of time and money, for the individual and for wider society. And it is a key lever of social mobility. Our progressive system of student finance has ensured that over time, what was once a prized good available only to the socially advantaged, has become more accessible to everyone.

But the way in which degrees are taught and studied has stayed largely unchanged, deterring some from higher education. The vast majority of providers offer their students the same traditional, inflexible three years of study regardless of subject, spread out across thirty weeks each year, broken by a long summer vacation every year.

Our vision for higher education - as a driver for social mobility and engine of national productivity - is rightly ambitious. The Higher Education and Research Act 2017 embodies that vision - widening both choice and value for students, driving a model of education that works equally and fairly for all.

Most people considering applying to university have to balance the proven benefits of a degree against tuition fees and living costs. They need to assess the likelihood of finding work, and the impact of deferring full-time employment for three years. This balance is a particular challenge for mature students, whose numbers have been falling in recent years

Accelerated degrees have the potential to drive a substantive transformation in higher education. Students on accelerated courses can secure a degree qualification in their preferred subject, studying the same content for the same number of weeks as the standard equivalent degree, subject to the same quality assurances. But by studying for more weeks each year, they are able to graduate within only two years, and with significantly lower loan commitments.

About three quarters of the providers who responded to our 2016 Call for Evidence reported seeing a demand for accelerated courses from students or employers. It is therefore frustrating that so few students have access to such courses. In England, of the approximately 1.5 million undergraduates currently enrolled, only around 2,500 - 0.2% - are studying accelerated degrees.

We accept there are higher annual costs to significantly wider accelerated provision. Existing fee cap arrangements do inhibit wider provision of accelerated courses. Barriers across the sector are real. New arrangements are needed to match tuition fees to the higher in-year cost - but total lower overall cost per degree - of delivering the typical 90 weeks of teaching across two years instead of three.

Under the new fee arrangements, while the standard degree student is completing their third year of study, an accelerated degree student will be starting their first year of employment, typically earning around £19,000 in that first year. Their tuition loans will

be in the region of £5,500 less than their three-year peers - around 20% less than a standard course. The accelerated degree graduate could end what would have been a third year of study over £25,000 better off than their standard-course contemporaries, yet with the same degree qualification and all the benefits it brings.

In setting those new arrangements, we need to balance the interests of student and provider. The annual fee for accelerated degrees must offer providers a realistic incentive to manage the necessary changes to traditional teaching and support arrangements. But it must also offer students genuine value for money and a significant reduction in the total cost of graduation.

At the right level, increased accelerated degree provision and take-up will also benefit taxpayers. More accelerated degrees will result in higher rates of repayment and a higher proportion of students who will repay their loans in full. Together with lower tuition fees, the lower debt burden for students and faster entry into the workplace, these factors all combine to reduce the overall cost to the public purse of higher education.

The Higher Education and Research Act gives the OfS a duty to promote greater choice and opportunities for students - including, as set out on the face of the Act, wider provision of accelerated courses. We will work closely together through the new regulatory framework to both regulate and promote accelerated degrees.

Our vision is for a decade of ambitious innovation across the higher education landscape, enabled by the new fee arrangements and championed by the OfS. Providers will have the scope to change their cost base, breaking out of traditional patterns of estate use and teaching to embrace this form of provision across the widest possible range of courses.

This in turn will give students a genuine choice in what to study, where to study and how to study – traditional or accelerated. Graduates will carry the same enthusiasm and drive that made accelerated degrees attractive to them into their working lives. Our aspiration is for the number of students enrolled on accelerated degree courses to build over the next decade to around 5% of the total undergraduate population, and for an additional 100,000 students to have studied on this basis over that period. The result will be a true transformation in the landscape of English higher education and graduate employment.

Our plan is for new arrangements to be place for Academic Year 2019/20. This consultation responds to the sector's evidence on barriers to accelerated degree provision. Now we need the sector to reciprocate – to seize the opportunity to develop flexible, innovative degree courses offering real choice and value to students.

JO JOHNSON

Introduction

This consultation is about the provision of accelerated degree courses in higher education. The consultation seeks views on how to enable and encourage wider provision of accelerated degree courses, and increased enrolment by students.

Who this is for

This consultation is for anyone with an interest in higher education, and particularly in flexible modes of provision. This includes:

- Higher education providers and representative groups
- Higher education provider faculty and professional services staff
- Prospective and current students and graduates, especially those who are studying or have studied on an accelerated degree course
- Student representative bodies; and
- Businesses of all sizes

Issue date

The consultation was issued on 11 December 2017.

Enquiries

If your enquiry is related to the policy content of the consultation you can contact the department on 0370 000 2288, or by email: Accelerated.Degrees@education.gov.uk

If your enquiry is related to the DfE e-consultation website or the consultation process in general, you can contact the DfE Ministerial and Public Communications Division by email: consultation.unit@education.gov.uk or by telephone: 0370 000 2288, or via the DfE Contact us page.

Additional copies

Additional copies are available electronically and can be downloaded from [GOV.UK DfE consultations](#).

The response

The results of the consultation and the Department's response will be [published on GOV.UK](#) in Spring 2018.

About this consultation

This consultation document sets out the following proposals:

- Arrangements for accelerated degree courses will be in place in Academic Year 2019/20, subject to Parliament
- Accelerated degree courses will be undergraduate first degree qualifications provided in a more intense period of study than other equivalent courses
- The Office for Students ('OfS') will support and encourage more providers to offer accelerated degree courses, over a more diverse range of subjects than are currently offered
- Only courses approved by the OfS as 'accelerated degrees' will be entitled to set tuition fees up to the relevant higher annual limit for Approved / Approved (fee cap) providers
- The long course terms of the current living cost support package will continue to provide maintenance for students on accelerated degrees
- The annual tuition fee and loan upper limit for all Approved (fee cap) providers would be set at 20% higher than the standard level. (For example, based on current fee limits, the annual accelerated limit for provider with an access agreement and a TEF award would be £11,100)
- For Approved providers, the annual tuition fee loan limit for accelerated courses would also be set at the standard level plus 20%. (For example, based on current standard limits, students at Approved providers with a TEF award would have an annual tuition fee loan limit of £7,398)
- Existing quality assurance arrangements (under the Office for Students) will apply to accelerated degrees.

We would like to hear your views on our proposals in general, and specifically on:

- The effect on demand for accelerated degree courses of the proposed savings for students (when compared to the cost of a standard-length degree), and the availability of long course maintenance support
- The impact on supply of accelerated degrees by Approved (fee cap) providers resulting from the higher funding available annually in the new fee arrangement
- The impact of the incentive provided in the new annual loan amount for Approved providers on supply and demand for their accelerated courses.
- The areas of higher and lower likely demand for these courses – in terms of types of courses, and providers
- The benefits for individuals from different backgrounds or at different points in life, such as mature students

- How the new regulatory framework and regulator could support their widespread and rapid adoption
- The impact for employers of increasing numbers of accelerated degree graduates in the available workforce
- How to raise awareness and improve understanding of accelerated degrees – for potential students and employers as well as providers
- Any safeguards needed to guarantee quality provision and avoid fraud.

The analytical evidence supporting the conclusions in this consultation is set out in the Regulatory Impact Assessment published alongside this document. We would welcome views on this Impact Assessment as part of this consultation.

Respond online

To help us analyse the responses please use the online system wherever possible. Visit consult.education.gov.uk to submit your response.

Other ways to respond

If for exceptional reasons you are unable to use the online system, for example because you use specialist accessibility software that is not compatible with the system, you may download a word document version of the form and email it or post it.

By email

Accelerated.Degrees@education.gov.uk

By post

Accelerated Degrees Consultation
Ground Floor
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London SW1P 3BT

Deadline

The consultation closes on 11 February 2018.

How responses will be used

A wide range of views from stakeholders and interested parties are being sought through this consultation process. We also invite stakeholders to share any research

undertaken and published that they consider relevant to the issues raised and to their response. Responses to this consultation will contribute to the evidence and advice that informs the final design decisions for funding of accelerated courses.

Confidentiality and data protection

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be subject to publication or release to other parties or disclosed in accordance with the access to information regimes (these are primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004). If you want your information, including personal data that you provide, to be treated as confidential, please be aware that, under the FOIA, there is a statutory Code of Practice with which public authorities must comply and which deals, amongst other things, with obligations of confidence.

In view of this, it would be helpful if you could explain why you regard the information you have provided 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.

Devolved Administrations

Higher education is a devolved matter in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. This consultation relates to higher education policy in England only, as will the Government response. The consultation does not commit any of the Devolved Administrations of the United Kingdom to any UK-wide actions or a policy position in this respect.

The background to our proposals

Policy context

1. Accelerated degree courses offer the same educational outcomes to those provided by the established and widespread longer forms of study. They often do so over two years rather than three, saving time and money and allowing graduates to enter the job market a year ahead of their contemporaries on traditional courses.
2. The 2016 Call for Evidence on accelerated degrees (which also considered the process of switching between courses or providers)¹ received responses from 44 higher education providers, 24 other bodies and 4,500 students. As the summary of these responses showed (published 20 December 2016), there are significant benefits for accelerated courses and lots of potential demand from students. The Department for Education's response to the Call for Evidence is at Annex C below.
3. Respondents cited the reduced overall costs for students and taxpayers, increased value for money, and faster entry into the labour market for graduates. Three quarters of the education providers who responded saw demand for accelerated courses from students or employers.
4. Accelerated degrees particularly appeal to students who may not otherwise have chosen to pursue higher education, such as mature students who want to retrain and enter the workplace more quickly than a traditional course would permit, and those who do not take a traditional A-level route into higher education.
5. Accelerated courses also appeal to younger students with a drive to complete their studies faster - for instance, to enter the graduate workplace as quickly as possible - and to international students who may prefer a shorter, more intense period of study abroad.
6. Despite these clear benefits, however, very few students currently study on this basis. We estimate that around 2,500 undergraduate were enrolled on accelerated degree courses in 2015/16 across English HE providers – a very small percentage of the 1.5 million undergraduate student population.^{2 3}

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/accelerated-courses-and-switching-university-or-degree-call-for-evidence>

² According to HESA student records, in 2015-16 there were 1,420,960 undergraduates enrolled at English HE Institutions and 53,275 undergraduates enrolled at English designated Alternative Providers.

³ Full details of the methodology used are available in Appendix A of the Impact Assessment.

7. Only a small number of HE providers currently offer accelerated courses. The split of students across these providers is relatively uneven. We estimate that, in 2015/16, around 70% of the 2,500 students studying accelerated courses were enrolled across six Alternative Providers of higher education⁴, and the remaining 30% - only 750 students - were enrolled with the 24 publicly funded HE Institutions (HEIs).⁵

8. As our Call for Evidence also identified, incentives in the system work against accelerated provision in publicly provided higher education. Such provision is cheaper overall than the total cost of a conventional three-year equivalent degree, but more expensive on an annual basis, as the final year of learning is incorporated within the other two years.⁶ Additional grant funding is currently available from HEFCE⁷, but only at the modest level of between £800-£1,400 per student per year, and providers are unable to charge higher annual fees.

9. Providers offering two year courses need to develop new patterns of teaching: for example, to allow for lecture programmes across more of the year. They need to consider different approaches to working patterns for teaching staff, many of whom who use gaps between terms to further their research. Providers of such courses also need to change the way they use their buildings and other facilities across the year. Finally, we recognise that any such provision involves foregoing the third year of tuition fee income from any students on these courses.

New powers, new opportunities

10. The Higher Education and Research Act (HERA) 2017 created a new power for the Government to set a specific annual fee for accelerated courses. In the debate in Parliament on the passage of the Bill, we committed to consult on the detail of our proposals. This consultation fulfils that commitment.

11. We are proposing changes to the fee and loan arrangements for Approved (fee cap) and Approved providers. Relying on more active promotion of this form of provision is unlikely to achieve the expansion we want to see, given the strength of

⁴ An 'Alternative Provider' is any provider of higher education courses not in direct receipt of recurrent funding from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) or from equivalent funding bodies in the Devolved Administrations; or does not receive direct recurrent public funding (for example, from a local authority, or the Secretary of State for Education); and is not a Further Education College.

⁵ UCAS course-level data was used to identify accelerated degree courses, which were then matched to HESA student records. Full details of the methodology used are available in Appendix A of the Impact Assessment.

⁶ Foster, Will, Liz Hart & Tony Lewis, 2011, "Costing study of two-year accelerated honours degrees", Higher Education Funding Council for England, http://www.hefce.ac.uk/media/hefce/content/pubs/indirreports/2011/RE_0311/rd03_11.pdf

⁷ The OfS will have responsibility to decide where funding is prioritised in the future, and may wish to provide additional funding to support accelerated degrees.

existing financial incentives, and the established ways of working in the HE system. New arrangements are therefore necessary to incentivise innovation and encourage wider adoption and provision of accelerated provision.

12. The new arrangements will initially apply to two-year degrees only. This focus reflects our expectation that the majority of future accelerated provision will come from two-year courses. Longer courses would require additional safeguards and separate arrangements. We may revisit acceleration of courses beyond the three-year standard, subject to the impact of the proposed changes on accelerated provision of three-year courses.

New fees for accelerated degree courses

13. HERA 2017 describes an accelerated course as:

“...a higher education course where the number of academic years applicable to the course is at least one fewer than would normally be the case for that course or a course of equivalent content leading to the grant of the same or an equivalent academic award.”⁸

14. A “higher education course” is defined in a way that could allow a fee to be charged in respect of a number of different qualifications, including degrees. While this would in theory allow a specific fee to be fixed for all those courses, that is not the approach we propose initially to take. Instead we intend to provide that a specific new fee should only initially apply to what we will call an “accelerated degree course” - an undergraduate degree qualification defined as follows:

- A course leading to a student’s first undergraduate degree
- Equivalent ‘standard’ (not currently accelerated) degree courses exist.
- Study is completed in a period of time of at least twelve months less than the equivalent standard degree course.
- Degree course is approved by the Office for Students as an ‘accelerated degree’.
- Offered, validated or franchised by Approved (fee cap) providers⁹, and
- Offered, validated or franchised by Approved providers¹⁰.

⁸ Higher Education and Research Act 2017, Schedule 2.4.2 <https://services.parliament.uk/bills/2016-17/highereducationandresearch.html>

⁹ That is, providers registered by the Office for Students in the Approved (fee cap) registration category of the new register of English higher education providers.

¹⁰ That is, providers registered by the Office for Students in the Approved registration category of the new register of English higher education providers.

15. We are aware that higher education providers currently use a variety of terms for degree qualifications that appear to meet the ‘accelerated’ definition set out in the Act. These include degrees described using terms like: “fast-track”, “two-year”, “compressed”, “time-compressed”, “condensed”, and “intensive” – as well as “accelerated”.¹¹

16. In developing our proposals we have taken into account that:

- a. A two year accelerated degree will lead to an identical qualification to its standard three-year equivalent in terms of the substance and calibre of learning required for qualification.
- b. Accelerated degrees will generally maintain the total volume of learning content as a three-year degree, by increasing the number of weeks of study in each year. Study is likely to run over the summer, with shorter academic breaks at other times.
- c. The pace of learning week-on-week for a student is likely to be broadly the same as a standard degree. There are typically 30 weeks of study annually in a three year degree, or 90 weeks overall. We envisage 45 weeks of annual study for an accelerated course, although we recognise other patterns may emerge.

Consultation Question

Are there any other technical features of accelerated degree courses that we should take into account for the purpose of new fee arrangements?

Yes

No

Explain

Our design principles

17. We have applied the following design principles as we have considered different options:

¹¹ Emma Pollard, Kari Hadjivassiliou, Sam Swift & Martha Green – Institute for Employment Studies, 2017, “Accelerated degrees in higher education”, Literature review, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/accelerated-degrees-in-higher-education>

- a. We should actively promote provision and take-up of accelerated degrees through reforms linked to the new regulatory framework.
- b. Any new fee and loan cap arrangements should lead to a significant reduction in costs for students through both lower tuition and lower maintenance.
- c. Any higher annual fee cap should be set no higher than the level at which a specific fee would be an adequate financial incentive for provision of accelerated degrees.
- d. The new arrangements should be compatible with the current student finance system for undergraduate degrees and any future reforms.
- e. The new arrangements should be provider neutral, reflecting the level playing field for providers created by the new Regulatory framework for HE.

18. We want an approach to accelerated provision that creates a credible, long-term incentive for accelerated degree courses to support the necessary reforms by HE providers. The new fee and loan cap arrangements are intended to be simple, to align with existing student finance rules and be easy to change to match reform to the rest of the system.

Our proposals

Working with the Office for Students

19. The Higher Education and Research Act (HERA) 2017 provided for the establishment of the Office for Students (OfS). The Act gives the OfS a duty to promote greater choice and opportunities for students - including (as set out on the face of the Act) wider provision of accelerated courses. Inception of the OfS is therefore an opportunity to focus directly and materially on widening the provision of accelerated courses.

20. A combination of strong OfS leadership and the new fee arrangements set out below should ensure that students face a genuine choice of traditional or accelerated degree courses across the full range of undergraduate courses.

21. We will work with the OfS to develop options to ensure prospective students from all backgrounds are able to access concise, relevant information about accelerated courses, so that they can take fully informed choices about their future in higher education.

22. We anticipate there will be considerable demand for accelerated degrees and, by complementing this demand with accurate and transparent information, the OfS will work to regulate the sector to drive improvements in their provision.

23. We believe there is also a key role for OfS as the 'gatekeeper' of accelerated degree definition. This would allow OfS to assess compliance with the definition and regulated fee charging as part of the conditions of registration. We will work with OfS to determine how such a role would operate in practice.

Living cost and payment arrangements for Students

24. Where degree courses (including accelerated degrees) currently run for more than 30 weeks and three days, eligible students can claim additional living cost support as a Long Course Loan ("LCL"). LCLs are a means-tested entitlement, whose rates vary depending on student geographical location and type, as well as the length of the additional study period required above 30 weeks and three days.

25. Eligible students currently enrolled on accelerated degree courses are able to claim LCLs to support their living costs for their additional weeks of study. As provision and take-up of accelerated degrees increases, we expect students on these courses to continue to access and use LCLs for their living costs as at present.

26. For the majority of accelerated degrees, we envisage the academic year is generally likely to run for more than 31 weeks. The current offer of accelerated degrees

typically includes two academic years of around 45 weeks each, aligning with the 91-92 weeks of study for a standard three-year degree course.

27. Although living costs for accelerated degree students will generally be higher in-year for each year of study, we estimate total maintenance loans while studying will be significantly lower than for their three-year counterparts. We note the suggestion that maintenance costs may be higher for accelerated courses than for standard equivalents and that students may be unable to work part-time to supplement their living costs ¹¹. We have yet to see any data that supports this suggestion.

28. The table below presents example figures for three means-tested bands of student maintenance loan entitlement in 2017/18: the maximum allowable, the minimum, and the average value of maintenance loans claimed. It compares the position of students on two and three year courses. Students from higher-income households who receive only the minimum loan entitlement are ineligible for the LCL.

Table 1 Means-tested student maintenance loan allowances, Academic Year 2017/18 estimates¹²

Years of study	Maximum (Representative Rate)		Average (Representative rate)		Minimum (Representative Rate)	
	3	2	3	2	3	2
Maintenance loan per annum (£)	8,459	10,364	6,067	7,344	3,945	3,945
Total maintenance loan per degree (£)	25,376	20,728	18,201	14,687	11,836	7,891
Total reduction in maintenance loan	-	4,648	-	3,513	-	3,945
Percentage reduction		18%		19%		33%

New fee and loan arrangements for Approved (fee cap) providers

29. The amount that Approved (fee cap) providers will be able to charge for higher education will be set out in regulations made under HERA 2017, which will need to be approved by both Houses of Parliament. Fee levels for Academic Year 2019/20 have yet to be set. For the purposes of considering how to treat accelerated provision, annual fee cap limit figures may mirror those available in the current system.

30. In the absence of specific arrangements for accelerated degree courses, funding would continue to favour provision of three-year courses. Providers of accelerated

¹² Source: DfE analysis of SLC data. The analysis assumes the academic year for accelerated study is 45 weeks, meaning LCL entitlements is calculated for 52 weeks of study. The three means-tested bands take into account the distribution of students across SLC entitlement categories of living with parents, away from parents in London, and away from parents elsewhere. Further details are available in Annex B.

degree courses would only be able charge two annual amounts, and forego the value of the third year of tuition fees.

31. We therefore propose that the annual higher and lower amounts allowed for accelerated provision in each Academic Year should be set at a level greater than the fee cap for longer courses. We intend initially to apply a standard formula that would allow a 20% uplift to reflect the additional in-year costs per course, and rebalance the incentives in the system away from longer models of study.

32. A formula applied on this basis to today's fee levels would result in an Approved (fee) cap provider being able to charge up to a maximum of £9,250 for a three year course and £11,100 for its two year equivalent. The actual figures for fee levels will be announced nearer the beginning of the Academic Year.

33. Our rationale for setting the fee for an accelerated degree at this level is that it strikes the right balance between the interests of the student and the provider, generating both savings for students and incentives for providers. As set out in Table 2 below, students would save 20% on the overall cost of their study. The HE provider would receive additional funding to support the higher costs of accelerated teaching in each year, but 20% less overall for the provision of the course on a per student basis. We expect the additional in-year fee revenue would cover the extra costs associated with accelerated provision for most courses and most providers.

34. Table 2 shows, for 2017/18 fee cap rates, the savings students can expect for the tuition fee cost of an accelerated degree (if charged at the top fee-capped rate of £11,100) compared to the total tuition fee cost of a standard three-year degree. Setting the annual tuition fee cap for accelerated degrees at the existing rate plus a 20% uplift would lead to a student saving of 20% on the total cost of tuition fee loans for the same degree delivered over three years.

Table 2. Annual and total fee and fee loan rates, Academic Year 2017/18, for standard and (20% uplifted) accelerated degrees¹³

	No TEF		TEF-rated	
	Standard three-year degree	Accelerated two-year degree	Standard three-year degree	Accelerated two-year degree
Tuition fee per annum (£)	9,000	10,800	9,250	11,100
Total fee per degree (£)	27,000	21,600	27,750	22,200
Reduction in tuition fee (£)	-	5,400	-	5,550
Percentage reduction for total tuition fees	-	20%	-	20%

¹³ Derivation of table data is set out at Annex B to this document

35. We expect a 20% uplift in the annual tuition fee rate to incentivise providers by removing the key financial barrier to wider provision of accelerated degrees. As provision expands across providers and courses, students will also have a stronger incentive to take up two-year degrees because of the significant savings to them, in both maintenance and tuition costs, and the opportunity to seek employment one year ahead of their standard degree contemporaries.

36. Table 3 below illustrates the potential total reductions for students in tuition fee loans and maintenance loans. The example given in Table 3 is for an accelerated degree at a provider with a TEF rating, compared with a standard three-year equivalent, across the three levels of maintenance loan entitlement outlined in Table 1.

Table 3. Total costs of student maintenance loan allowances and maximum tuition fee rates, standard vs accelerated degree course, Academic Year 2017/18 values (20% uplift) ¹³

Years of study	Maximum maintenance loan entitlement		Average maintenance loan entitlement		Minimum maintenance loan entitlement	
	3	2	3	2	3	2
Tuition fee loan per annum (£)	9,250	11,100	9,250	11,100	9,250	11,100
Total tuition loan per degree (£)	27,750	22,200	27,750	22,200	27,750	22,200
<i>Reduction in tuition fee loan (£)</i>	-	5,550	-	5,550	-	5,550
Maintenance loan per annum (£)	8,459	10,364	6,067	7,344	3,945	3,945
Total maintenance loan per degree (£)	25,376	20,728	18,201	14,687	11,836	7,891
<i>Reduction in maintenance loan (£)</i>	-	4,648	-	3,513	-	3,945
Total cost of degree (£)	53,126	42,928	45,951	36,887	39,585	30,091
Total reduction for accelerated degree	-	£10,198	-	£9,064	-	£9,495
Total percentage reduction for accelerated degree	-	19%	-	20%	-	24%

37. A final benefit of accelerated degrees for students is realised in their opportunity to enter full-time employment one year in advance of their three-year degree contemporaries. The average first year earnings of a graduate are around £19,000.¹⁴

Consultation Question

Do you agree that an annual fee cap set initially at the standard rate plus a 20% uplift is the right amount to incentivise wider provision of accelerated degrees?

Yes

No

Explain

Do you agree that a 20% reduction overall for students, in tuition fee and maintenance loans, would incentivise wider take-up of accelerated degrees by students?

Yes

No

Explain

New tuition fee loan arrangements for Approved providers

38. At present, most accelerated degrees are offered by Alternative Providers ('APs')¹⁵. Our 2015/16 estimates indicated that around 1,750 of the population of 2,500 students now enrolled on accelerated courses are at APs. We expect some of these

¹⁴ This estimate is taken from the Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) experimental statistics for 2012/13 graduates, adjusted to 2017 prices using the GDP deflator measure of the UK economy's price level.

LEO data source:

Department for Education, "Graduate outcomes: longitudinal education outcomes (LEO) data", <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/graduate-outcomes-longitudinal-education-outcomes-leo-data>

GDP deflator source:

HM Treasury, 2017, "GDP deflators at market prices, and money GDP September 2017 (Quarterly National Accounts, September 2017)", <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/gdp-deflators-at-market-prices-and-money-gdp-september-2017-quarterly-national-accounts-september-2017>

¹⁵ An 'Alternative Provider' is any provider of higher education courses not in direct receipt of recurrent funding from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) or from equivalent funding bodies in the Devolved Administrations; or does not receive direct recurrent public funding (for example, from a local authority, or the Secretary of State for Education); and is not a Further Education College.

providers will continue to operate outside the fee cap under the new regulatory arrangements, as Approved providers on the Register.

39. Approved providers will continue to be free to set tuition fees at the rate they choose, and to offer accelerated degrees whose fees, as now, reflect the cost of provision and/or market demand for these courses.

40. Students at Approved providers will be eligible for the same maintenance loans as Approved (fee cap) providers, whether on standard or longer course degrees, including accelerated degrees. However, tuition fee loans available to students at Approved providers will still be limited to the basic rate of tuition fee, no matter what actual fees are charged by the provider.

41. Figures for Academic Year 2019/20 have yet to be set. For the purposes of considering how to treat accelerated provision, annual tuition loan figures may mirror those available in the current system.

42. An increase in the fee loans available to students at Approved providers would make their accelerated degrees more affordable to a wider range of individuals, by increasing the proportion of funding that students can be loaned by Government and reducing the proportion of tuition fee costs they are currently required to fund directly. A 20% uplift in the accelerated degree loan cap for students at Approved providers with a TEF rating would see the maximum loan amount set at £7,398 compared to £6,165 for standard three year provision.

43. Students enrolling on Approved provider accelerated courses whose tuition fees are above the loan amount would continue to need to fund the balance directly themselves.

Consultation Question

Do you agree that a 20% increase in loan cap rates per annum is the right value to incentivise wider uptake of accelerated degrees at Approved providers?

Yes

No

Explain

Quality assurance and access arrangements

44. Accelerated degrees are currently subject to the same expectations of the UK Quality Code as their standard three-year counterparts¹⁶. We concur with the QAA's view that these expectations should continue alongside the expansion in provision of accelerated degrees.

45. To ensure the maintenance of quality assurance for accelerated degrees, the following challenges will need to be addressed:

- The impact on providers of delivering the full suite of learning support and resources for the whole period of accelerated study
- Ensuring that accelerated degree timescales include sufficient time for moderating, marking and assessment of student performance
- Managing changes to staff working patterns, in particular around the need for staff to maintain the quality of teaching through take-up of training and research opportunities
- Recognising the specific pressures an accelerated degree places on students, and assessing the capacity of individual students to work within and benefit from the more intensive learning framework
- How to incorporate student work experience and placements within the accelerated timetable
- Managing the understanding and expectations of the quality of accelerated degrees in the wider community – in schools and amongst employers.

46. Higher education providers are required to use a proportion of higher fee income to support access, student success and progression for disadvantaged students. As accelerated degrees fees would be considered “higher level fees”, those providers with an access and participation plan (in future known as Approved (fee cap) providers) will need to include the income from courses offered on this accelerated basis within their access and participation plans. Future Approved providers who are not fee capped will need only an access and participation statement, which does not require them to spend any specific percentage of fees on access arrangements.

¹⁶ The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is used to assure the standards and quality of UK higher education. It is owned, maintained and published by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) and has been developed in consultation with the higher education sector <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code>

Consultation Question

Do you agree that accelerated degree fees should be treated in the same way as other higher course fees for the purpose of access funding?

Yes

No

Explain

Payment and repayment mechanisms and safeguards

47. We propose to maintain the current payment and repayment policies and systems for students on accelerated degree courses as they are for those on standard equivalent three-year degree courses.

48. We will continue to pay tuition fee loans directly to the Higher Education provider via the Student Loans Company (SLC) in three instalments at the start of each term. For students starting degrees in the autumn, payments will be made in October (25%), February (25%) and May (50%). Confirmation of student attendance will continue to be required at the start of each term before SLC pays the tuition fee loan.

49. We will pay maintenance support loans and other associated finance (dependants grants) directly to eligible students, also via the SLC, in three instalments across the academic year. For the majority of students who start courses in September, maintenance support will be calculated up-front and split across three payments in September (33%), January (33%) and April (34%).

50. A borrower will repay the loans on the same basis as other undergraduate student finance, as 9% of earnings above the income threshold.

Additional safeguards and controls

51. We would welcome views on any other practical considerations that we should take into account to safeguard students and public money as we see a greater expansion of accelerated degree provision. There are existing courses that operate on an accelerated basis, and we are keen to draw lessons from that experience.

52. We recognise the need for arrangements to support students that want to move from accelerated provision to less intensive study patterns. We also need to ensure

equivalence of treatment for students that drop out and then want to restart on another course.

53. We are unaware of any accelerated degree courses currently being offered on a distance learning basis. We would anticipate any such provision is likely to be niche, and would require stricter controls on the part of providers, reflecting the need to consider each student's capacity to manage the more intensive duration of study schedules, the risk of non-continuation and the importance of ensuring proper management of public funds. We envisage students who are unable to attend in person by reason of disability would be included in the new arrangements as they currently are for standard three-year degrees.

Consultation Questions

Should any additional safeguards and controls be in place as a proportionate and effective measure to ensure expanded provision of loans for accelerated degrees provide value for money to the taxpayer?

Yes

No

Explain

Are there any additional practical considerations we should take into account as we develop our final regulations to support accelerated degree course provision?

Yes

No

Explain

Public Sector Equality Duty

54. The proposed tuition fee policy for accelerated courses does not make any distinction regarding the Public Sector Equality Duty protected characteristics. There is however, evidence that mature students are more likely to enrol on accelerated courses, and we are seeking to secure further evidence on this through consultation.

55. The protected characteristics include: age, gender, gender reassignment, disability, race, marriage and civil partnerships, pregnancy and maternity, sexual orientation, religion and belief. The Government is interested in gathering evidence on the potential affect the policy will have on any of the protected characteristics and would welcome your views.

Consultation Question

Should the Government be aware of any other issues relating to the way in which the proposed tuition fee policy for accelerated degree courses will affect any of the protected characteristics? If your answer is 'yes', please set out what steps in your view the Government might take to mitigate any negative impact.

Yes

No

Explain

Supply, demand and awareness

56. We want to take the opportunity of this consultation to deepen our understanding of the likely supply and demand for two year accelerated degree courses. To that end, we are keen to have the best possible view of the current state of provision, and we seek the views of providers, students (current and potential) and current and potential employers on the impact of the proposed changes on future supply of and demand for accelerated degrees.

57. We are aware that a large share of the accelerated degrees currently available is offered in the Greater London area. Of the 30 HE providers we've identified that offer accelerated courses, just over 25% are London based¹⁷. This figure includes Alternative Providers who typically enrol larger cohorts of students on accelerated degrees.

58. A further 25% of HE providers offering accelerated degree courses are located across the Midlands. The numbers of students on accelerated courses here are, however, typically small in comparison to London¹⁸. Around 20% of provision is across the South East and West of England.

59. The lowest provision of accelerated degree courses is across the North of England. The North West, Yorkshire and Humber and the North East combined have less than 20% of the HE providers offering accelerated degree courses, with no providers currently identified in the North East. Student numbers studying accelerated degrees at these northern institutions are also low (less than 60 students in total).

60. Provider, student and employer interest in accelerated degrees and their potential benefits is significant. Yet the provision, range of subjects and number of students taking accelerated degrees all remain low. This consultation sets out our proposals to address the current barriers to wider provision.

61. Given the far reaching nature of our proposals, the extent and composition of current provision seems to be of limited value in assessing the impact of these changes on future supply, the profile of that supply, and the demand for two year courses. We would therefore welcome views on the courses likely to be offered, the likely volumes, locations and planned roll-out of increased provision, along with any insights into the potential student take up (by subject, location and year); and the impact of increased numbers and qualifications of accelerated degree graduates on the employment market.

¹⁷ The providers are identified from UCAS course information as part of the estimation of student numbers. Information on this methodology is available in Appendix A of the Impact Assessment. Regional splitting of HEIs is taken from <https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/league-tables/>

¹⁸ With the exception of Staffordshire University which had around 200 students enrolled on accelerated courses in 2015/16.

Consultation Questions

Do you currently provide any form of accelerated degree course? If 'yes', please provide details of type of course, study pattern, current enrolment cadre.

- Yes
- No
- Details

Based on the policies set out in this document, are you considering offering new or additional accelerated degrees when tuition cap uplifts are enacted? If your answer is 'yes', please set out what types of course and volume of provision you are considering.

- Yes
- No
- Details

Based on the policies set out in this document, are you considering applying for an accelerated degree when tuition cap uplifts are enacted? If your answer is 'yes', please set out what type of course and provider you are considering.

- Yes
- No
- Details

Have you been, or are you currently an employer of any graduates of accelerated degrees? If your answer is 'yes', please tell us about your employee – subject of degree, job role.

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

- Details

Based on the policies set out in this document, do you agree that an accelerated degree has any specific merit in current or future potential employees? If your answer is 'agree', please set out any advantages you consider an accelerated degree-qualified graduate might have as an employee over their standard three-year degree equivalent.

- Agree
- Disagree
- Unsure
- Details



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for Education

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