

FUTURE OF HE

Early provocations and potential indicators of future trends

Introduction

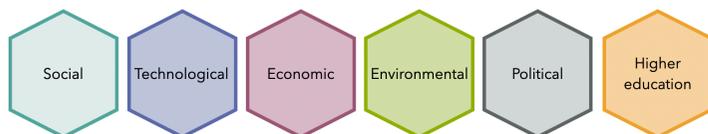
This short paper is designed to support conversation about the future of HE. It draws on the initial findings from Ash Futures' horizon scanning work.

We have included 26 individual issues, grouped into 7 themes:

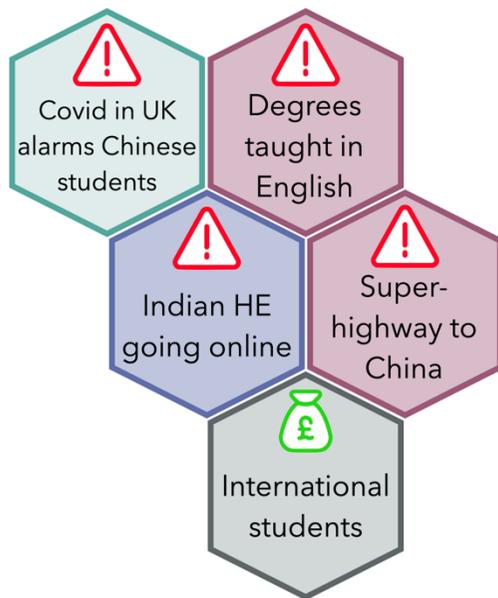
- The changing international student landscape
- Transformation in UK HE financial stability
- The accelerating technology revolution
- Changing work, jobs and skills
- Wellbeing
- Higher education in transition
- Global challenge

Each individual issue is colour coded according to the broad category we believe it falls into. The categories are shown at the bottom of each page.

Each issue is also marked as a potential opportunity, a potential threat or as having an uncertain outcome for Unite. This is our interpretation and is subjective. Readers may disagree.



The changing international student landscape



Chinese students are particularly concerned about weak UK government measures to address covid. They are alarmed by the UK death toll - and that many people in the UK do not follow social distancing guidance and do not wear face masks in public - in contrast to widespread practice in China.

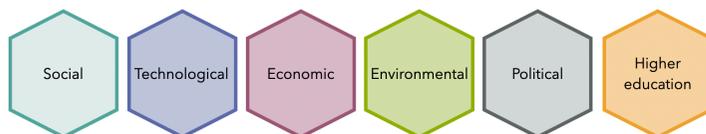
Taiwan's education ministry is driving expansion of university **degrees and postgraduate courses taught in English** as part of an effort to attract foreign students. The ministry held meetings in October 2020 to select universities to move towards the goal of **half** of all undergraduate courses, **70%** of masters courses and **90%** of doctoral degree courses to be taught in English within a few years. This compares to fewer than a third of masters and doctoral courses taught in English at present.

India is accelerating plans to offer higher education online as the coronavirus crisis forces universities and colleges to close while the student population swells. India has more than 35m students in HE, up from about 8m in 2000. The government wants to boost the figure to around 70m by 2035.

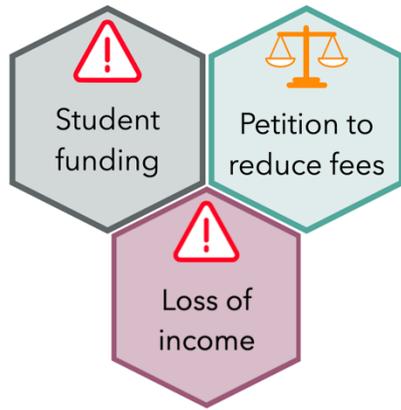
In 2003, there were 1,793 **African students enrolled in Chinese universities**. The number rose to 81,562 students in 2018, increasing by 4,549% in a 15-year period, or by 303% annually. This is the fastest international student growth rate among all the world regions. Academics suggest the main rationale underpinning China's recruitment of African international students is to build a soft power strategy in its engagement with African countries.

At Cambridge (for example), tuition fees do not cover the cost of each domestic student, leaving the university to fill the gap with overseas fees, research grants and philanthropy. Weaning elite universities off international students may not be desirable - which is why the government has **a target of 600,000 international students a year by 2030**. That is an increase of 25% from the current level.

Key



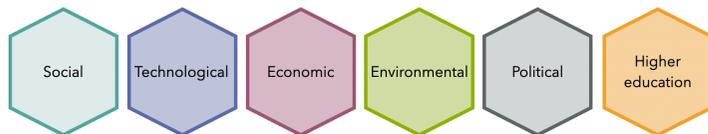
Transformation in UK HE financial stability



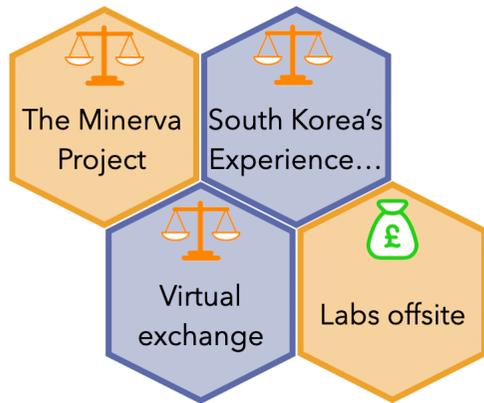
The Covid-19 pandemic could **cost the Westminster government up to £12 billion extra in higher education funding** for England over the long term. The Institute of Fiscal Studies (IFS) has suggested that about a dozen universities could go bust over the long term as a result of financial problems caused by the Covid crisis.

A petition calling for UK university tuition fees to be slashed from £9,250 to £3,000 has received more than 200,000 signatures. The appeal has received a spike in interest since Boris Johnson announced that universities would need to move almost all teaching online during England's third national lockdown.

UK HE relies on student fees for half its £40bn annual income. The Institute for Fiscal Studies suggests that **sector-wide losses could amount to £19bn**. Loss of income from reduced international student numbers could be over 10% (4.3bn). One-off refunds of £1,000 per student - offered because of the pandemic - will push many institutions into deficit. Losses in other income streams such as events and on-campus retail are equally concerning.



The accelerating technology revolution

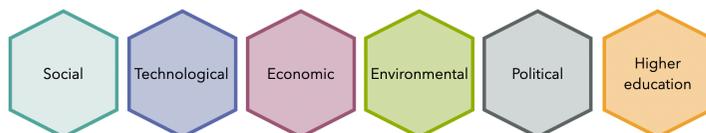


The Minerva Project is a **venture-backed Silicon Valley startup which aims to revolutionise HE**. There are no lectures, faculty buildings, or exams. All teaching is done through online video classes. There is only one programme of study for first years - teaching transferrable skills such as critical thinking and problem-solving, through classes named "multimodal communications", "empirical analyses" and "complex systems". Subject specialisms are chosen in the second year. There is no campus; students are housed in a residence hall in San Francisco in their first year. Subsequent year groups spend semesters variously in Seoul, Hyderabad, Berlin, Buenos Aires, London and Taipei.

South Korea's schools and universities have almost wholly switched to online education. The country's impressive IT infrastructure has not, however, delivered widespread online education acceptance. Satisfaction rates among students have plummeted with low quality of classes (38%) and dissatisfaction with tuition fees (28%) as the major reasons. Neither students nor teachers have the technical skills to interact effectively in online class environments and have received no training.

Virtual Exchange (VE) is the practice of **sustained, technology-enabled, people-to-people education** programmes in which constructive communication and interaction takes place between groups who are geographically separated or from different cultural backgrounds. For some, VE is a meaningful approach to widening inclusion. To others, it is a distraction from the value of international study.

Universities are making **greater use of holograms and home experiments** to teach the "hands on" elements of laboratory work and medical training online.



Changing work, jobs and skills



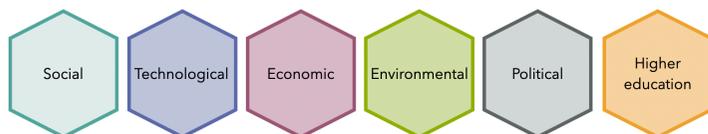
Big companies like IBM, Google, Amazon and Deloitte don't necessarily require degrees of people they're hiring into traditional 'white collar college degree jobs' anymore. Instead, **these companies are shifting towards 'new collar' jobs**: entirely new roles in areas such as cybersecurity, data science, artificial intelligence and cognitive business. What matters most for these jobs is aptitude and skills - which is perhaps better obtained through vocational training rather than further or higher education.

Micro-credentials - mini-qualifications in a given subject area or capability - are key to helping higher education reach non-traditional groups who need to upskill or reskill. Policy makers see them as a shorter, more targeted and flexible way to address the short-term needs of society and labour markets. For universities, micro-credentials offer a specialised and targeted way to widen participation to different groups of students and allow them to experiment with the use of new technologies.

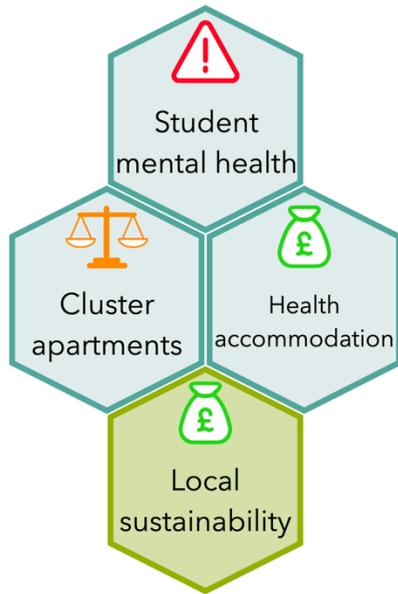
T Levels - launched by the UK government in September 2020 - are a 2-year qualification that students can do as an alternative to A levels, other post-16 courses or an apprenticeship. Students spend 80% of their time in the classroom and 20% on a 45-day placement with an employer to give them the skills and knowledge companies want.

The world is facing a reskilling emergency. More than 1 billion jobs, almost one-third of all jobs worldwide, are likely to be transformed by technology in the next decade, according to OECD estimates. By just 2022, the World Economic Forum estimates 133 million new jobs in major economies will be created to meet the demands of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Key



Wellbeing



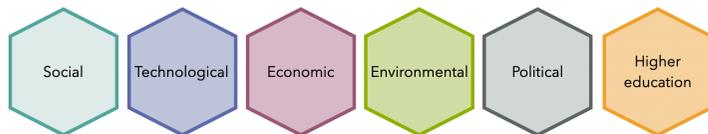
In early October 2020, Finn Kitson, a first-year student living in halls of residence, was found dead in his room after suffering from anxiety. The mental health charity Mind found **73 per cent of students reported their mental health had declined** during lockdown.

New halls of residence for the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST) feature 'cluster apartments' that house up to 36 students each. The 35,500m² project will be completed in 2023 and become home to more than 1,500 students. The residences will allow between 18 to 36 students to share one apartment as a 'single, self-contained household [which will] encourage a sense of ownership and cohesion

Student accommodation is likely to focus more as a student hub for living, socialising and maintaining wellbeing in one space. With students already increasingly moving away from partying before the pandemic, there is also a much bigger focus from accommodation providers on maintaining student health - more relevant given the mental health impact of lockdown

Universities should reinvigorate the civic role of institutions to build ecologically and socially resilient communities as part of their efforts to help lead the UK strategy for tackling climate change. They should collaborate more locally, building alliances between scientists, artists, politics and society, particularly from marginalised communities, and become drivers of transition to sustainability in their local community. They must also lead by example in redesigning their day-to-day operations to reduce emissions.

Key



Higher education in transition

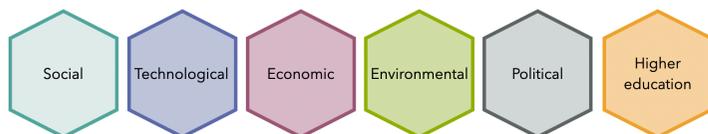


New trends could give rise to a wave of **freelance academic “superstars”** as **institutional affiliations erode** and “learning designers” supplant many traditional academics, says the report by the University of Melbourne’s Centre for the Study of Higher Education

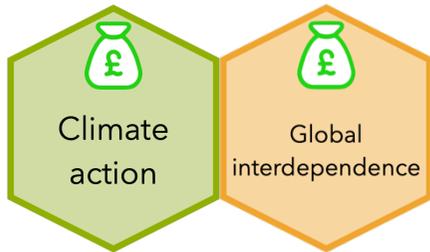
While the pandemic seems a once in a lifetime event, it is, nevertheless, possible that we could see other kinds of significant disruptions. There may therefore be **a case for re-framing university ranking metrics around resilience** - the capacity to prepare for and respond to crises. Key criteria for resilience could centre on diversification, flexibility and innovation, risk, values, value maintenance, and community outreach. Existing rankings schema touch on some of these, but not through the resilience lens

University administrators are tired of outsiders’ gloomy predictions. For them, the dominant force is not AI, distance learning or political tensions; it’s the desire of young people to go to university. In 2010, the Millennium Cohort Study asked mothers of children born at the turn of the millennium whether they hoped their children would go to university; 97 per cent said yes. At the age of 14, the children gave themselves a two-thirds chance of doing so. When the pandemic is over, universities will recover.

The next generation of academics and researchers could be lost to better-paying occupations as deteriorating employment conditions render university careers less appealing. Students may gravitate to explicitly vocational degrees leaving arts, commerce and some science degrees to wither on the vine.



Global challenge



UN secretary general António Guterres has called on the world to take **urgent action to combat climate change**. Guterres remarked that the UN is working with institutions of higher education across the globe and that “the contributions of universities are essential to our success”. Responding to Guterres’ speech, Joanna Newman, chief executive of the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) said “I am so pleased he acknowledged universities’ role because...all the responses lie within universities, whether it is through educating students or through producing knowledge.”

In our ever-more interconnected world, today’s global challenges can only be solved by **collective action**. For HE, this means students and scholars around the world working together. This is more than international students attending university in a foreign country; it is an institutional realisation of and commitment to our global interdependence and the need to train the next generation of young leaders, engage with diverse voices and work together to address our collective problems. It’s about students from different cultures and backgrounds studying together and faculty working together across borders with partners in ways that empower everyone.

