

# News story: Government launches consultation on accelerated degrees

Students could be left over £25,000 better off by choosing an accelerated degree instead of a traditional three-year course, according to proposals set out today in a new government consultation.

Accelerated degrees offer the same qualifications and are quality-assured in the same way as a standard degree, but delivered over a shorter, usually two-year timespan. This means when most students are completing their third year of study, an accelerated degree student will be starting work and getting a salary.

The proposals, announced today (10 December), include a £5,500 (20 per cent) saving for students in total tuition costs compared to a standard three-year course. When added to the average salary of £19,000 in the first year after graduating, it means a potential £25,000 benefit overall.

For the taxpayer, it means significantly lower tuition loan outlay, higher rates of repayment and therefore a lower cost to the public purse of higher education. A higher proportion of students on accelerated degrees will also repay their loans in full.

Although the proposals allow institutions to charge up to 20 per cent more each year for accelerated degrees, the overall tuition fee cost of the degree to the student is 20 per cent less than the same degree over three years.

Providers already offering accelerated degrees report on more engaged students, positive employer feedback and the opportunity to attract a wider pool of applicants, including mature students who often want to retrain and enter the workplace more quickly.

New fee arrangements for these degrees are set to be in place by September 2019, subject to parliamentary approval.

Universities Minister Jo Johnson said:

For too long we have been stuck with a system that has increasingly focused on offering only one way of benefiting from higher education, via the classic three year degree programme.

The passage of the Higher Education and Research Act this year has finally enabled us to break the mould of this one-size-fits-all system so students have much more choice over how they learn.

Many will want to stick with the classic three year university experience, but for highly motivated students hungry for a faster pace of learning and a quicker route into or back into work, at lower overall cost, two year degrees will be well worth

considering.

Professor Les Ebdon, Director of Fair Access to Higher Education, said.

Accelerated degrees are an attractive option for mature students who have missed out on the chance to go to university as a young person. Having often battled disadvantage, these students can thrive in higher education and I hope that now many more will be able to take up the life-changing opportunity to get a degree.

There has been historic cross-party support for this policy, from Shirley Williams in the 1960s, to Labour spokesman Lord Stevenson, Roberta Blackman-Woods, Lord Liddle and Lord Watson who all supported it in the passage of the Higher Education and Research Bill.

There are a range of accelerated courses currently on offer – including Law, Accountancy and English – but the ambition is make more courses available across the widest possible range of subjects.

Karl McCormack, who teaches accelerated degrees in Accounting & Finance at Staffordshire University, commented on the increased focus of students on accelerated courses.

I find that the accelerated degree offers so much more to students, including the extra focus, the drive and the immersive experience of constantly learning over the two years.

Accelerated degrees appeal to a broad spectrum of students, including mature students who want to retrain and enter the workplace more quickly, and those who do not take a traditional A-level route into higher education.

Laura Montague, a student in her final year of an accelerated degree at Staffordshire University, said:

The fast-track course is exactly the right option for me. Being able to do the course in a two-year timeframe instead of three really makes you dive into the course knowing that completion is not far off. It also prepares you well in terms of how the working environment will be when you finish.

Providers offering accelerated degrees will need to meet exactly the same quality assurance measures as for the standard three-year equivalent degrees.

The new regulator, the Office for Students, will also support the provision of accelerated degrees when it becomes a legal entity in 2018.

The consultation will run until February 2018.

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## **Press release: PM's statement on Iraq's announcement regarding Daesh: 9 December 2017**

On behalf of the United Kingdom, I congratulate Prime Minister Abadi and all Iraqis on this historic moment. I pay tribute to the Iraqi Security Forces for their courage and sacrifice.

Daesh no longer hold significant territory in Iraq or Syria. This signals a new chapter towards a more peaceful, prosperous country.

I am proud that the UK, as a leading member of the Global Coalition, has stood shoulder-to-shoulder with Iraq to help them open that chapter. I saw the effects of this first hand when I visited last week.

The UK, as a Coalition member, has played a leading role in supporting the Iraqi Security Forces, including the Armed Forces and the Peshmerga, in the fight against Daesh. UK aircraft have launched over 1,350 air strikes in Iraq and have trained over 60,000 members of the Iraqi Security Forces.

UK aid provides a vital lifeline to millions of Iraqis with emergency food, shelter, medical care and clean water. We are now supporting the Government of Iraq to lay the foundations for an economy that meets the aspirations of all Iraqis.

We must be clear however, that whilst Daesh is failing, they are not yet defeated. They still pose a threat to Iraq, including from over the Syrian border.

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## **News story: The AAIB has sent a team to Hertfordshire**

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# Press release: International Trade minister holds UK-Qatar talks to strengthen trade

This week, International Trade Minister, Greg Hands, met with Qatari Minister of Economy and Commerce, HE Sheikh Ahmed bin Jassim al Thani, for the inaugural Joint Economic and Trade Commission (JETCO) between the 2 countries.

Today's talks explored opportunities to strengthen and build on bilateral trade ties. It follows a commitment made by the Qatari Prime Minister in March to invest an additional £5bn across the UK over the next 3 to 5 years. The talks concluded with both sides signing a statement outlining their mutual commitment to support small businesses in both countries and improve access to trade financing to help exporters.

Trade between the UK and Qatar was worth more than £5bn in 2016, with machinery, mechanical parts and precious stones and metals among the most popular UK goods exports to Qatar.

International Trade Minister Greg Hands said:

I am delighted to be meeting with my Qatari counterparts today as we look to strengthen our trade and investment relationship, identifying opportunities for growth and breaking down barriers to trade between our nations.

As an international economic department, we are committed to building a long and fruitful trading partnership with Qatar over the coming months and years.

During the talks, the Ministers also met UK companies working in Qatar and looked at ways to overcome market access barriers, while fresh dialogues on education and technology will create significant opportunities for important UK industries.

## **Notes to editors**

Total trade in goods and services (exports plus imports) between the UK and Qatar totalled £5.2 billion in 2016.

This was the first meeting of the UK-Qatar JETCO, which will meet every year to advance the trade and investment relationship.

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## Further information

Contact the DIT Media and Digital Team on 0207 215 2000

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# Press release: Foreign Secretary statement ahead of visit to Iran

Iran is a significant country in a strategically important, but volatile and unstable, region which matters to the UK's security and prosperity.

My first visit is an opportunity to hold further discussions on a series of crucial issues, including how we can find a political solution to the devastating conflict in Yemen and secure greater humanitarian access to ease the immense suffering there. I will also underline the UK's continued support for the nuclear deal while making clear our concerns about some of Iran's activity in the region.

We will also discuss our bilateral relationship and I will stress my grave concerns about our dual national consular cases and press for their release where there are humanitarian grounds to do so.

While our relationship with Iran has improved significantly since 2011, it is not straightforward and on many issues we will not agree. But I am clear that dialogue is the key to managing our differences and, where possible, making progress on issues that really matter, even under difficult conditions.

I look forward to a constructive visit.