

Speech: Universities Minister reinforces the civic role of institutions

Thank you for inviting me to speak at the launch of the UPP Foundation Civic University Commission report this afternoon. I'd like to thank the Commission for all its work on this important topic. The Commission's findings provide an invaluable opportunity to showcase some good examples of universities' civic activity, as well as highlight some ideas for how universities can make further progress in this area.

As many of you know, since becoming Universities Minister, I have made it a commitment to get out and visit as many universities and colleges as possible. I'm now well into double digits, having visited around a dozen different providers so far. And, already, it has become abundantly clear to me just how much our universities contribute to the UK – not just through their invaluable global relationships, but also through their national and local activities.

At a basic level, universities are often one of the largest employers in a local area. They are particularly important employers within deprived communities, and can play a significant role in regenerating regions. I know, for example, that Coventry University has opened a new facility in Scarborough as part of a £45million development in the Weaponess area of the town. This is a great illustration of the transformation that can occur when a strong, civically-minded university creates jobs and raises aspirations in a local community.

In my own constituency city of Bristol, I've also recently visited the Temple Quarter Quays development, where the university is finally taking action to remove the derelict former Royal Mail sorting office – a building which David Cameron once said made the city look like a "war zone". The site is set to become a new £300million campus for the University of Bristol – proving that if you want something done, you have to look to universities to get things moving.

The skills universities deliver to local people are absolutely vital for our government's Industrial Strategy – to allow us to succeed in our long-term plan to boost productivity and earning power across the country. These skills can be technical and vocational, but crucially they are also transferable. Not surprisingly, demand for highly-skilled graduates shows no signs of decreasing in an economy that is increasingly becoming a knowledge-based one.

This is why a key part of our Industrial Strategy includes a truly place-based approach, and we see universities' contribution to their local areas as being an increasingly important part of this. Manchester was, in fact, the first city I visited outside London in my role as Universities Minister, where a joint initiative by Manchester Metropolitan University and the

University of Manchester, called 'The Works', has helped over 5,700 local residents from the most deprived areas of the city to find jobs, develop skills and access training. I want to use this occasion today to express my commitment to working with universities across the country to ensure that they are able to play pivotal roles in their local economies.

I know as well as you do that universities are crucibles of their local communities and are best-placed to help set up coordinated plans for local industrial strategies. Just last week, I was pleased to read about Keele University's commitment to its 'New Keele Deal', designed to deliver a local industrial strategy for Stoke-on-Trent and the wider Staffordshire area, in partnership with Staffordshire University, local authority partners and the private sector.

Universities can, and already are, using their resources to help local businesses in a diverse range of ways. One way of doing this is via Skills Advisory Panels to pool knowledge on skills and labour market needs with local employers. I welcome initiatives such as the University of Nottingham's free 'Languages for Business' service, which provides language skills and cultural expertise for small to medium-sized businesses (SMEs) in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire, to help them succeed in the global marketplace.

Too often universities are not given the credit they deserve for the innovations they have stimulated. In this respect, the 'Made at Uni' campaign, initiated by Universities UK, is a really important intervention to show the UK public just how pivotal universities have been to the life-changing developments that we often take for granted. The research that universities undertake can be civic in so many ways: some of this research has obvious impacts on our health and wellbeing, such as the major role played by the University of Plymouth's research into health education across the South West of England. Other research can also support local economies, like the University of Lincoln's Institute of Agri-Food Technology, which focuses on research into greater productivity in agriculture and food production.

This government has continuously looked to put university research at the heart of regional growth. Schemes like the Leading Places Programme and the Strength in Places Fund take a place-based approach to research and innovation and encourage partnerships between universities and other public and private sector bodies. One great example of what can be achieved is in the North-East of England, where a collaboration between Gateshead Council, Newcastle City Council, Newcastle University and Northumbria University is actively exploring ways, using digital technologies, to tackle obesity through the promotion of healthier environments.

As a government, we have always been committed to encouraging universities to make the most of their civic engagement. The Research Excellence Framework (REF) was the first sector-wide exercise intended to help universities assess the impact of their research outside academia by rewarding institutions delivering research with significant local relevance. As part of the last REF (REF 2014), over 6,600 individual Impact Case Studies were submitted by

higher education institutions to evidence the wider impact of their work. With all eyes now firmly fixed on the REF 2021, I look forward to seeing just how much this impact has developed and increased. I am also hugely encouraged to see the emphasis that the REF 2021 panels have placed on local impact, alongside national and international impact, in their recently published guidance.

To further encourage universities in England to enhance their contribution to cities and regions, we have also introduced the Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) to support our Industrial Strategy and equip higher education providers with new ways to benchmark and share their knowledge and expertise. As the Minister overseeing the roll-out of the KEF pilots, I am pleased that so many universities have expressed an interest in taking part – with a total of 21 universities now in the KEF pilots.

The consultation on the KEF metrics is also currently underway, giving all English higher education institutions a say in how the KEF could work. The consultation is open until 14th March and I encourage all universities and the Commission to complete the survey and make their views heard. This is your chance to help co-create an exciting moment in the history of the English higher education sector and show how you want to help shape it for the future.

As a Minister in BEIS as well as the DfE, I understand the power of knowledge exchange and that it is not just about universities transferring their resources to local communities, but about universities absorbing lessons from their communities and embracing their expertise. As a new Minister, I want to be the Minister demonstrating and delivering why the KEF matters, and how it can help to publically communicate the value of our universities going forwards into the future.

With both the REF and the KEF defining the impact of universities broadly – from the local to the global – there is no reason that either Framework should be seen as barriers to a university contributing to their local area. As a government, we believe both these Frameworks should be wide-ranging in terms of what they are assessing. Universities know their local regions and areas of expertise better than anyone else, so it is not up to us to be overly prescriptive about what activities they should undertake and how they should approach them.

Instead, our role in government is to enable universities to best meet our broader ambitions to improve productivity and social mobility. In my first HE speech last month, I outlined a vision for higher education by 2030 moving towards a unity of purpose. To make this vision a reality, it is important the relevant sector agencies also move towards a unity of purpose when it comes to supporting place-related developments. To this end, I welcome on-going cooperation and unity of purpose across Research England and the Office for Students (OfS). Between them, they can play a major role in improving our understanding of how students and teaching contribute to knowledge exchange activities and inform future strategies, including the Higher Education Innovation Funding (HEIF).

I recognise universities do not operate in a vacuum, and I welcome measures which allow them to highlight their particular local contexts – such as the provider submission element of the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF), through which providers can detail wider civic activity, their local mission and regional engagement. As a historian by background and someone who understands the importance of narrative, I believe these provider submissions are key to emphasising geographical differences, and are likely to help universities reflect their individual contexts more accurately than any more formulaic approach.

Widening participation is a priority for this government. As I said in my first HE speech last month, I recognise that going to university might not be right for everyone. But I also recognise that anyone with the capability to benefit from it and succeed should have the opportunity to go.

Universities can play a key role in raising aspirations. Through their access and participation plans many higher education providers are working with schools, colleges and other local partners to raise awareness of the benefits of higher education. In addition, the OfS provides funding for the National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP), comprising 29 consortia delivering sustained and progressive outreach in local areas. And I also know there are many other examples out there of good practice – such as the ‘South Yorkshire Futures’ programme, led by Sheffield Hallam University, which is committed to improving education and raising aspiration for young people in the South Yorkshire area.

Universities make a real difference to local communities, not just by getting people into higher education, but enabling them to progress into meaningful work afterwards. The Challenge Competition, administered by the OfS, specifically helps providers develop projects to support graduate employability and improved outcomes for graduates who choose to remain in their local area. I look forward to working with the OfS and the Director for Fair Access and Participation over the year ahead to consider what more can be done to recognise and appreciate the many ways universities contribute to social justice and mobility in their individual regions.

As for the UPP Foundation Civic University Commission report launched this week, we, in government, will be sure to study the report’s recommendations in detail and look at how some of the proposals can be integrated into work that is already being planned or undertaken – either by Research England, the OfS, or wider government departments.

I’m truly grateful to the UPP Foundation for commissioning this important project, and I hope that the Foundation will continue to lead the agenda and debate on the civic university going forwards. I particularly welcome the suggestion for new initiatives such as civic agreements, which aim to encourage universities to take a more strategic approach to their civic activity. It will be important that universities do not create these in isolation, and that we consider further how universities can be encouraged to join up with other key actors in their local areas to create agreements that best serve their entire community.

As a Minister across two Departments, I've asked officials in both the DfE and BEIS to work further with the Commission and the UPP Foundation to look at how we can take their work forward into the future. For now though, I want to thank all of you again in our universities and colleges for your truly transformative work in our cities and regions across the country. And I look forward to working with you in the year and months ahead to help enhance your positive impacts on the ground.

[Speech: Fuller Working Lives: 2 years on](#)

Ladies and gentlemen, it is a pleasure to be here.

The last time I spoke to the BritishAmerican Business group was actually back in 2013. It was in Reading, you were on a roadshow and I was thinking what did we talk about because that was before Brexit.

But I did look through the agenda and the agenda was trade – all about trade between the UK and the US. And TTIP. So it was current then and it is current now.

Anyway, I probably shouldn't digress from my speech so let me deliver the speech and then I am very happy to take questions on Brexit or anything else you would like.

So let me start by saying there are 3.4 million more people in work today than in 2010, and around three quarters of all the jobs created over the last 8 years have been full-time, permanent roles and in what we refer to as higher level occupations which ultimately attract higher wages.

All the increase in employment in the last year has been driven by full-time and permanent jobs. And I think from my perspective I want to thank all of you here because you are very much the people who have made this happen – so a huge thank you from me and the rest of the government.

Actually people have been benefiting across every region of the country

Employment growth has been strongest in regions where it has historically been low. And this point was reinforced in the [Resolution Foundation's report](#) which I helped launch last month as it set out how record employment has changed the United Kingdom.

Across society, all groups are benefitting as well.

In fact, it is those who previously found it harder to find jobs who are benefitting most from the jobs growth we have seen over the last 8 years.

More women are in work than ever before; the ethnic minority employment rate is at a record high; youth unemployment has almost halved since 2010; a million more people with disabilities have entered the jobs market since 2013; and there are more than 10 million people over the age of 50 still in work.

Now I'm not going to ask how many of you are over 50 – you all look very young to me. But I have just got over 50 so I am now an older worker, as we class it.

And this is the group that we are going to be looking at today.

As we live longer, healthier lives many people are extending their working life.

But it may surprise many to know that, despite our increased longevity, men are actually leaving the labour market at an earlier age than in 1950, with women leaving at the same age.

Whilst there are those who have planned and saved to retire early, there are lots of people exiting the labour market before they would really want to.

Analysis of the British Social Attitudes survey which looked at working later in life showed that just 39% of those who had already retired did so because they wanted to.

So that means 61% of people who retired did so not wanting to but wanting to work longer, or indeed because they had health conditions or were unable to work. And that's quite a powerful statistic in my view.

And while employers have long been making arrangements to enable parents to look after their children – which of course is a very good thing – there is also an increasing need to support their older workers who are caring for parents or partners. And I will return to this theme.

It is widely accepted of course that boosting the number of older workers in employment has benefits.

I want to focus on 3 in particular.

The first are the rewards for an individual who enjoys a fuller working life; second is the boost for employers; and third is the benefit to the national economy.

So firstly, I do think we are too quick to forget the impact that the routine and social nature of work has on our individual health and wellbeing. For most people, being in what they consider to be good work can be good for their health, both physical and mental.

Secondly, at an employer level, I know from my conversations with businesses that you yourselves recognise the value of keeping hold of your talent or bringing their experience into your workforce.

And not only that: we are all familiar with the productivity challenge we face in this country. Armed with more experience, the efficiency of older workers could be part of that solution.

And thirdly at the national level, according to PwC analysis, if the UK could reach the employment rate for 55 to 64 year olds that Sweden currently enjoys, it would boost our GDP by £80 billion. This of course would mean boosting our employment rate for this co-hort to around 76%. This will take effort from all us – but we have made progress. Since 1984 we've lifted the employment rate for 55 to 59 year olds from around 60% to just over 74%.

And it is with those 3 benefits in mind that I am convinced that improving employment rates for older workers is a collaborative process – requiring business, government and individual action.

Around 2 years ago we launched our [Fuller Working Lives Strategy](#) which was written by business, for businesses.

It made recommendations about how businesses can retain, retrain and recruit older workers – with a strong business case alongside each.

I won't repeat the detail of it – you will have read that – but we have made progress since we set out that plan.

As part of the recommendations there were a number of ideas around engaging with workers to support them on changing their working pattern and reshaping the end of their careers.

Since then, much work has gone into what we are calling mid-life MOTs – a moment to take stock of your career and your finances, and to plan for the future with support from your employer.

Last summer a number of organisations including Aviva, L&G and the Pensions Advisory Service ran pilots with their employees.

And as we advocate for mid-life MOTs amongst business it is important that we in government set the pace on this.

So last year my department ran our own pilots with just under 300 staff. It was voluntary and involved a personal review with their line manager and the opportunity to sit down with the Civil Service pension team.

The initial feedback that we have got is that people found it a really useful exercise. What we are evaluating now is what impact those conversations have had on changing behaviour.

And as the results of all the pilots are shared, ours as well as the private sector pilots, we will start to see how the midlife MOT can be used to ignite a cultural shift in how people plan for their later career.

We now also have the Flexible Working Taskforce, and there may well be people here who are represented on that, which includes a range of government departments and business stakeholders.

The theme of flexible working is also something that comes through in the government's [Good Work plan](#). I have to say that often flexible working is seen as a response to working parents, which I've said is a very good thing.

But flexible working must also be seen through the prism of older workers.

They are group who so often carry a range of responsibilities – caring for grandchildren, parents or indeed for their partners.

They are often woefully undervalued in these roles, and their needs have not been voiced loudly enough in the debate about flexible working.

Bringing their cause to the fore is something that we can make sure is achieved through this taskforce.

While action has been taken and progress is happening, older workers are continuing to take on employment, there is more to do.

And there are 2 areas in particular that I am looking at to boost the employment rates for older works. The first do with our jobcentres.

Almost all are already paired with the National Careers Service and our Older Worker Champions are working actively on behalf of the older jobseekers we support.

But on a recent visit to the jobcentre in Birkenhead I met a jobseeker in his fifties and a jobseeker in her twenties – and they sparked an interesting thought.

While the older jobseeker had navigated the working world – with all its workplace politics – the way that employers recruit today was very new to him.

Conversely, the younger jobseeker was far more comfortable with rigorous recruitment processes, detailed application forms and online testing, but actually welcome real-life insight into how to get-on once she had the she job wanted.

At the moment, our jobcentres often working with jobseekers in clusters – young people, ethnic minority jobseekers, older workers and so on.

To me it makes sense that in many ways to bring people with a shared experience together – building up their confidence and addressing specific barriers.

But if we take down the divides between these groups, rather than just supporting each through shared experience they can help one another by sharing their different experiences.

Just as employers value older workers as mentors, jobcentres should too – with the added benefit that the mentoring can be mutual.

And of course it's interesting in the context of the discussion we have just

had about reverse mentoring – this is something that is as applicable in jobcentres as it is in the workplace more widely.

The second area I am looking at is enrolment in our Work Experience Programme and Sector Based Work Academies.

Currently, over fifties are in the minority of the people who start these programmes making up around just 10% of those who have taken up the opportunities since we launched these initiatives in 2011.

But for those who have been out of work for a while or who are looking to change their job as they grow older, these are the bridges to the work that they are looking for.

There needs to be a cultural shift in the opportunities we think older workers are open to. For example, apprentices are often thought of as fresh-faced, inexperienced workers.

But increasingly employers are successfully opening up their schemes to older applicants, in some cases specifically targeting older workers.

Jobcentres should be doing just the same with the opportunities they have on offer.

So I have my to-do list on improving the employment prospects for older workers – I hope as you leave this conference later on today you will have your own.

But before I conclude, I want to make the point that whilst the interventions I've talked about today focus on the over fifties, we must also get on the front foot with the young generation of workers coming in.

There needs to be a resetting of the dial when it comes to how people plan their careers.

A job for life is no longer a certainty – nor is it what many people want today.

That does not need to be alarming – there is a sense of freedom in that.

But to make the most of it, people setting out in their working life must be prepared to adapt.

Adapt to how their job needs will change as their personal circumstances change over time.

And, particularly for the new generations, how they adapt as the world of work changes as technology is replacing as well as creating jobs.

People coming into the workplace now have a different attitude to their parents.

They are starting to understand that lifelong learning is more crucial than

ever. And that one's legacy can be in 2 or 3 careers, not just in one.

And I will repeat myself here. This doesn't need to be alarming.

Much has been said about concerns for the future of work – particularly in the face of automation.

But each industrial revolution has created more jobs than there were before.

So I am confident that we will continue to see a strong labour market. Bringing more people into the workplace – for our collective and individual benefit.

Press release: EU vessels prevented from electric shock fishing post Brexit

EU vessels will no longer be able to carry out electric pulse fishing in UK waters after Brexit, Fisheries Minister George Eustice announced today.

Pulse trawling is a controversial fishing method that uses electrical signals to drive flat fish, such as sole, from the seabed into nets. While further scientific research is being conducted into the practice, there are concerns about its impact on the marine environment.

Using an electric current to fish was banned by the EU in 1998 but since 2006 pulse beam trawling has been allowed under an EU derogation. At present, over 80 Dutch vessels hold permissions to use this method in certain parts of the southern North Sea, including in UK waters outside the 12-mile zone.

A Statutory Instrument (SI) will be laid in Parliament later today (Wednesday 13 January) to provide continuity for the fishing industry by ensuring EU law on technical conservation is operable in the UK – but the current derogation for EU vessels will be removed, meaning they will not be able to conduct pulse trawling in UK waters.

The legislation comes as the UK prepares to leave the Common Fisheries Policy and become an independent coastal state, committed to building a sustainable and profitable fishing industry and delivering a green Brexit with new protections for our precious marine environment.

Fisheries Minister George Eustice said:

There are serious concerns about pulse fishing and it is wrong that the EU has allowed it to happen.

We will stop EU vessels pulse fishing in UK, safeguarding our marine environment and keeping our seas sustainable for future generations.

The EU Exit SI will apply if the UK leaves the EU without a negotiated deal, or after any implementation period included in a deal.

While the UK is [taking back control of how its waters will be managed](#) after exiting the EU, the European Union is currently considering removing its derogation as part of its ongoing review of technical conservation measures.

In addition to technical conservation measures, the SI – the Common Fisheries Policy and Aquaculture (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 – will ensure retained EU Law regarding Regional Fisheries Management Organisations and the North Sea multiannual plan, is operable in the UK after we leave the EU.

There are three UK vessels (two English and one Scottish) that use pulse fishing and Defra is working with Marine Scotland to review their licenses.

[News story: Apache and Wildcat to touch down in Estonia as UK bolsters its commitment to NATO](#)

The Army aircraft will provide aviation training opportunities to NATO allies on Estonia's annual Exercise Spring Storm as well as to the UK-led battlegroup on NATO enhanced Forward Presence.

The helicopter deployment will boost our contingent to around 1,000 personnel in the Baltics, making the UK the largest contributor to NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence – further reinforcing the Alliance's deterrence and defence posture.

At NATO HQ, the Defence Secretary underlined the UK's support for the USA's position on the INF Treaty following repeated violations by Russia – a stance shared by Allies.

The Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Whenever the call comes from NATO, the UK has always been ready to reach into its full spectrum of capabilities and offer its support.

That's why we're bolstering training in Estonia by deploying some of the world's most advanced helicopters to the country.

Mr Williamson discussed a range of issues with counterparts – noting the continued progress being made by allies on defence spending and encouraging others to follow the example set out by the UK.

He also took the opportunity to welcome Macedonia as the latest member of the Alliance, recognising their accession as a positive for the Western Balkans region and for Euro-Atlantic security. Belgium's contribution to the UK-led enhanced Forward Presence battlegroup in Estonia this year was similarly welcomed by the Defence Secretary.

With the meeting marking the first gathering of Defence ministers in NATO's 70th year, Mr Williamson also looked ahead to future events marking the anniversary of the world's most successful alliance – including the UK having been invited to host a meeting of leaders in December.

[News story: Goodbye GSI – DWP email addresses are changing](#)



The [GSI \(Government Secure Intranet\)](#) network is being phased out across government. As part of this change, '.gsi' will be removed from Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) email addresses by 28 March 2019.

From 28 March 2019 if you use any existing DWP email addresses, you will need to change these from:

...@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

to

...@dwp.gov.uk

The new addresses will be active by 28 March 2019 – please do not use them before this date. Until then you may still receive emails from DWP's '.gsi' email addresses.

Ensure you update any records that contain DWP email addresses from 28 March 2019. These may include directories, web applications or forms.

Any messages sent to a DWP '.gsi' address after 28 March 2019 will receive an automated email response asking you to use the new address.

If you have any questions about this change, or need more information email

us at oed.removalofgsiproject@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

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1. 21 March 2019 Changed the date that DWP email addresses will change from 31 March 2019 to 28 March 2019.
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