

DOWNLOADABLE RESPONSE BOOKLET FOR THE

# **THE HIGHER EDUCATION BIG CONVERSATION HAVE YOUR SAY**

The consultation document can be downloaded from the DEL website:

<http://www.delni.gov.uk/index/publications/minister-statements/hebigconversation.htm>

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**Please complete the following information.**

**Question One:**

**NAME:**

University and College Union

**Question Two:**

**E-MAIL ADDRESS:**

belfast@ucu.org.uk

**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION**

The Department will publish a summary of responses following completion of the consultation process. Your response, and all other responses to the consultation, may be disclosed on request. The Department can only refuse to disclose information in exceptional circumstances. Any automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will be taken to apply only to the information in your response for which confidentiality has been specifically requested. Before you submit your response, please read the paragraph below on the confidentiality of consultations and it will provide you with guidance on the legal position regarding any information given by you in response to this consultation.

The Department will handle any personal data you provide appropriately in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. The Freedom of Information Act gives the public a right of access to any information held by a public authority, namely, the Department in this case. The right of access to information includes information provided in response to a consultation. The Department cannot automatically consider as confidential, any information supplied to it in response to a consultation. However, the Department does have the responsibility to decide whether any information about your identity, should be made public or treated as confidential.

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The Department cannot accept responses by telephone. General enquiry calls may be made to the above number.

**Question Three:**

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Current higher education student:

Prospective higher education student:

Former higher education student:

Parent:

An employee of the higher education sector:

Employer:

# **THE HIGHER EDUCATION BIG CONVERSATION HAVE YOUR SAY**

The consultation will be open for submissions from 6<sup>th</sup> October 2015 until 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2015. The consultation document can be downloaded from the DEL website

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**Question Four:**

To what extent do you think that the existing higher education system supports

**Question Five:**

To what extent do you think that the existing higher education system supports Northern Ireland's wider economic development?

Very sufficiently

Sufficiently

Unsure

Insufficiently

Very insufficiently

Please explain your answer.

The Higher Education Big Conversation 'Have Your Say' document highlights examples of how the HE sector is supporting economic development – by showcasing spin-out companies, funding for world-class research, intellectual property and so on. It makes the point that NI's universities and colleges secured over £90million each year in funding

**Question Six:**

To what extent do you think that disinvestment in higher education will intensify





**Question Eight:**

To what extent do you think that disinvestment in higher education will hinder

**Question Nine:**

Are there alternative models of higher education delivery which could better support Northern Ireland's skills needs and wider economic development in the future?

Yes

No

Unsure

Please explain your answer.

Yes, a progressive taxation system, please see answers at 17 & 20.

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**Question Ten:**

To what extent do you think that the existing higher education system supports high quality higher education provision in Northern Ireland?

**Question Eleven:**

To what extent do you think that the existing higher education system supports fair access to, and widens participation in, higher education in Northern Ireland?

Very sufficiently

Sufficiently

Unsure

Insufficiently

Very insufficiently

**Question Twelve:**

To what extent do you think that the existing higher education system enables social

**Question Thirteen:**

To what extent do you think that disinvestment in higher education will undermine the quality of Northern Ireland's higher education system, in both teaching and research?

Very significantly

Significantly

Unsure

Not significantly

Not at all

Please explain your answer.

Disinvestment in HE will seriously undermine the quality of NI's HE system, in both teaching and research. UCU's policy paper on teaching quality and student learning (*Beyond the Consumerist agenda: teaching quality and the 'student experience' in HE*, 2014), argued that government policy on research had been 'dominated by a co -0.2 (d)2(l) -0. (o (e)-03-0.2 (e) -0.2 ( .2 (o) -24 0 0 0.0.2 (o) - (T) -





**Question Fifteen:**

To what extent do you think that disinvestment in higher education will undermine

**Question Sixteen:**

To what extent do you think that the adoption of exceptional application routes could help to address under-representation in higher education, particularly of disabled students?

Very significantly

Significantly



**Question Eighteen:**

Do you think that the existing higher education system strikes the right balance between: the quality of provision on the one hand; and the quantity of provision on the other?

Yes

No

Unsure

**Question Nineteen:**

To what extent do you think the existing higher education system in Northern Ireland is sustainable?

Highly sustainable

Sustainable

Unsure

Unsustainable

Highly unsustainable

Please explain your answer.

The existing system is sustainable if the Department is prepared to confront the private sector and force them to contribute to higher education funding for the benefits which they enjoy. Budget cuts effecting course closures, reduction of student places and job losses will undermine the future of the HE sector and weaken the Northern Ireland economy.

**Question Twenty:**

Are there any other models of higher education delivery which you think could better support the needs of Northern Ireland?

Yes

No

Unsure

Please explain your answer.

Yes, as previously stated UCU is in favour of a Business Education Tax. The union also believes proactive steps must be taken to close tax loopholes and improve collection rates.

UCU believes that a Business Education Tax would enable Northern Ireland to:

- Make access to higher education free
- Reduce student debt and re-incentivise participation
- Reduce the cost to tax payers of servicing student loans
- Increase the amount available for universities to invest
- Increase the engagement of the corporate sector with higher education
- Promote 'returning to learn' schemes in the private sector in return for tax breaks
- Guarantee the plentiful supply of graduates our economy requires
- Leave Northern Ireland with a competitive corporate tax structure and protect small businesses from a tax increase
- Provide a powerful incentive for government to collect all unpaid corporation tax.

**Question Twenty-One:**

Are there any other models of higher education funding which you think could better support the needs of Northern Ireland?

Yes

### Question Twenty-Two:

Bearing in mind ongoing constraints on public spending in Northern Ireland, how do you think Northern Ireland's higher education system could be put on a sustainable footing?

The key to sustainability is an ongoing commitment to a publicly funded higher education through a progressive taxation system. UCU believe this is the only viable strategy for economic stability and growth for a very small country/devolved region of the UK.

There is a need for a change in political emphasis and we believe the Northern Ireland Executive and the Department has choices. In seeking the solution for the long term sustainability of the HE sector, the Department needs to think more creatively and reject the free market ideology that is having devastating consequences for higher education in England. Scotland also has a devolved budget and has chosen to protect



## **Further Information**

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