



New Horizons: responding to the challenges of the 21st century

The Interim Report of the Joint Future Thinking Taskforce on Universities

New Horizons highlights clearly the need for increased flexibility in Scottish higher education:

“Learning provision in universities must become more flexible if it is to respond to the changing needs of students.”

At the stakeholder meeting on 18 August, the point was made in a number of the breakout groups that the country’s skills needs will not be met if reliance is placed solely on full-time higher education on the conventional model, and the Cabinet Secretary made a similar point several times from the platform. It appears to have been lost sight of, however, in the report of the meeting.

So, to be clear, The Open University is firmly of the view that national policy for Scotland’s universities needs to give greater weight than now to means of promoting and enhancing flexible and part-time routes, especially for those who cannot afford to give up work; and to removing the remaining inequities of treatment in funding and student support as between part-time and full-time students.

As the new roles and relationships between universities, the Scottish Funding Council and the Scottish Government are developed, we have a real opportunity to ensure that these inequities are addressed and that flexible, part-time learning is embedded as a central plank in Scotland’s plans to become a high-skill, globally competitive economy.

The Open University
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