



Terms of Reference for The Wakeham Review of STEM Degree Provision and Graduate Employability

Summary

1. Evidence gathered as a result of a joint BIS-DfE review of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) skills provision has highlighted that STEM skills are vital to the UK's ability to compete in a rapidly changing global economy. Systems of higher education and continuous professional development have grown to support the provision of skilled graduates, but it is right to ask whether the current arrangements for provision of STEM skills are fit for the future.
2. In considering the future of STEM skills within higher education it is important to recognise the role played by accreditation regimes. Professional accreditation has a key role to play in setting minimum standards for degree courses and supporting continuing professional development. The Government is, therefore, commissioning an independent review to explore the provision of STEM skills and accreditation arrangements to determine if there are areas which warrant further investigation.
3. The review will focus on gaining a better understanding of the skills requirements of employers, how STEM graduates' skills and knowledge relate to and interact with labour market demand, and how existing accreditation systems support and enable this. The review will not seek to make explicit recommendations on specific accreditation regimes. Instead it will seek to identify options for future, more in-depth, exploration of specific STEM subjects and their associated graduate outcomes.
4. The review has links to a separate independent review that the Government has commissioned to look specifically at computer science degree accreditation in England. This, more targeted review, will lead to specific recommendations on how the degree accreditation systems for computer science could be strengthened to ensure that the subject keeps pace with the needs of private sector employers and the IT professions.

Scope

5. The review was announced as part of, and builds on, the Government's Science and Innovation Strategy which aims to ensure that building a knowledge-based economy is at the heart of economic growth. With this in mind, initially the review will include in its scope HE provision and accreditation mechanisms of those STEM subjects that are broadly judged to be of particular importance to the development of high-productivity economic growth led by the private sector. As the review progresses and further evidence is gathered, the scope of the subjects being covered may alter to accommodate emerging trends or findings.
6. Degree subjects that are related to the medical profession have been excluded from the review's scope. The labour markets for these types of professions are largely funded by the

taxpayer and are, therefore, subject to a greater degree of scrutiny and planning at the national level.

Governance

7. The review will be led by Sir William Wakeham who will be supported by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). The review should also work as appropriate with a range of representative institutions for higher education, industry and the professions, including relevant academies and chartered bodies. Where appropriate, the review should take into account the findings of other reviews which may address similar issues.

Interdependencies

8. The review will have links to the more specific review of computer science degree accreditation. Where appropriate, links should be made between the two reviews, particularly where there might be trends or patterns common to the array of STEM degree subjects.
9. The review should also make links and cross-refer, where appropriate, to reviews being taken forward by the higher education funding organisations for England, Wales and Northern of the future arrangements for assessing quality in higher education. Professional accreditation has an important role to play in ensuring quality and the overlaps and shared learning between the review and wider work on quality assurance should be identified.

Timing

10. The review should report in the winter of 2015/16.



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