

17 March 2005

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Dear Sir Alan

Gateways to the Professions

Please find enclosed the Royal Society of Chemistry response to the consultation on Gateways to the Professions.

The RSC is the largest organisation in Europe for advancing the chemical sciences. Supported by a network of 45,000 members worldwide and an internationally acclaimed publishing business, our activities span education and training, conferences and science policy, and the promotion of the chemical sciences to the public.

We have responded to the issues in the consultation on the attached pro-forma. However they do not address the most significant barrier to access to professions in or based on the chemical sciences.

The most significant barrier is the absence, or potential absence of course provision at the local level and by the nature of the provision. A number of universities have discontinued provision following individual decisions driven by national funding policies. Closures have been in spite of evident demand from applicants for places. With a few notable exceptions, chemistry as an undergraduate subject is now only offered by research intensive universities and the courses provided reflect that mission.

For there to be access to the profession for all, chemical science needs to be provided in local institutions and this needs to be a diversity of provision to meet the needs of students, and the wide range of career opportunities in addition to the R&D mission so successfully fulfilled by the research intensive universities. There is no longer a ladder of part-time and diploma courses leading both to employment and entry to degree courses. Unless the remaining provision is protected, enhanced at the local level, and diversity increased, implementation of measures arising out of this consultation will have little effect.

Yours sincerely

Libby Steele (Mrs)

Manager, Professional Education and Development

00221.

Gateways to the Professions

Consultation Questions

January 2005

Contents

		Page
Section A:	Introduction	2
Section B:	Background	3
Section C:	Progress to date	3
Section D:	Key themes and issues	4-11
Section E:	Next steps	11-12
 References:		
Appendix 1	Statement to the House	13
Appendix 2	Reference Groups	14

Section A - Introduction

Professional careers in the 21st century are tough and challenging. In most professions the essential elements of a recognisable code of ethics, a system of self regulation and a sense of vocation remain but many aspects of professional life are subject to fundamental change.

There is now a much stronger emphasis on professional accountability shaped by third party regulation, market forces and a tough regime of standards, performance monitoring and mandatory continuing professional development. For many there is also a greater dependence on new technologies, changes at the boundaries between different professions requiring new approaches to teamwork and an overriding imperative to take account of changing public attitudes.

The old approach based on the paternalism of the professions and the blind trust of clients, patients, pupils and customers is consigned to history. The new professionals have to be responsive to the needs and wishes of the people they serve and they have to reflect the broad sweep of modern society and the social, ethnic and economic mix of the communities where they live and work. It is the responsibility of government, our universities, professional bodies and employers to work together to ensure that we prepare and develop professionals in a way that maximises their contribution to the economic, social and cultural development of the country.

The Higher Education Act 2004 will lead to the introduction of variable fees in universities in England from 2006 and may create a new barrier for those wanting to enter the professions, especially those who just fail to qualify for the full £3000 support available in grants and bursaries. It is for this reason that I have been asked by the Secretary of State for Education and Skills to ensure that universities, professional bodies and employers coordinate action to provide clear, accessible gateways for those who want to pursue a professional career and to consider how employers and the professions can sustain and improve recruitment opportunities for graduates.

There is no single definition of what constitutes a profession but throughout this work I will focus on those professions where a first degree followed by a period of further study or professional training is the normal entry route and where there is a professional body overseeing standards of entry to the profession.

This initial document sets out some of the key questions to emerge from the discussions that I have held so far. Your views will count and I welcome your responses to these questions and any further thoughts, ideas and insights you may have on the challenge of providing clear, accessible gateways to the professions.



SIR ALAN LANGLANDS

Section B - Background

The Secretary of State for Education and Skills commissioned a report to examine the gateways to the professions commencing in July 2004 and invited Sir Alan Langlands to lead this work. Sir Alan Langlands has an independent role in preparing a report, which examines how employers and the professions can sustain and improve recruitment opportunities for graduates, especially those who do not qualify for the full £3000 support available in grants and bursaries under the government's proposals to introduce variable fees from 2006. It will make recommendations to Ministers on action that can be taken to ensure clear accessible gateways for all graduates who want to pursue professional careers. Work started formally on 1 July 2004 following Royal Assent of the Higher Education Bill, with the aim of reporting to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills by mid-2005

Section C - Progress to date

Following an initial stakeholder meeting in July 2004, Sir Alan felt it would be beneficial to look in-depth at a small number of key professions to help identify the main issues to be addressed. In light of this he invited six professions with an interest in both the public and private sector to be included as case studies. These are veterinary science, architecture, engineering, dentistry, the law and teaching in schools. The case studies are only one strand of the research and analysis and the wider consultation will allow all professions with an interest to provide an insight into the issues facing them. The case studies are now available on the Gateways website at:

www.dfes.gov.uk/hegateway/hereform/gateways-to-the-professions

Two reference groups have also been established to help Sir Alan with his work, one for the public and one for the private sector. Membership of the groups has been drawn up to offer broad representation to ensure the report will be as informed and fair as possible. The first joint gathering of the Reference Groups took place on 22 November with further meetings planned for March and May 2005. A key stakeholder event is also planned for early January 2005 to launch the main consultation period. This will involve a wide range of organisations and will outline how they can contribute to the review process.

During the period 10 January to 18 March 2005, Sir Alan will be receiving written consultation responses. The report team will also be meeting with a number of organisations for in-depth discussions during this period. The details of how to get involved in the consultation are set out on Page 11 of this document.

Section D - Key Themes and Issues

1. Modernisation of the Professions

The information revolution, technological advances and organisational changes have all had an impact on the role of the professions over recent years. As a result there are numerous examples of changes to professional roles, often matched by the development of new professional or associate professional jobs. The teaching profession, for example, is under-going a process of workforce remodelling which is removing a range of administrative tasks from teachers, whilst at the same time creating a career structure for teaching assistants with the development of new higher level teaching assistant posts. In medicine and nursing we are seeing the development of new approaches to teamworking eg between paramedics and accident and emergency professionals and the development of extended roles such as nurse practitioners.

Another trend is for previously unregulated occupations to develop professional standards and professional oversight. A recent example of this is the professionalisation of the Civil Service proposed by Sir Richard Mottram. This trend meets concerns that a 'licence to practice' is required for people who are in positions of trust, so that the public has confidence in the services it uses. However, there can be a tension between the security and reassurance offered by a 'licence to practice' and concerns that they may create barriers that can result in preserving an affluent professional elite.

The development of new occupations at associate professional and higher technician level has been accompanied in some cases by the development of new qualifications such as foundation degrees which have enabled more students from diverse backgrounds, especially mature students and those studying part-time at this level. However, despite rising demand from students for more flexible methods of study to be available for entry to the professions, and particularly for progression from associate professional/higher technician to full professional status, these progression routes are often difficult to develop. Professional accreditation is increasingly based on combining the requirement for basic knowledge and understanding with technical skills and a professional outlook which has to include an understanding of the ethical basis of practice, excellent communications skills and a capacity for self-directed learning. Traditionally much of this has been delivered by universities and professional bodies with intakes at age 18 but other models are possible. One excellent example of widening access to mature students is the GEM (graduate entry to medicine) schemes which allow suitable graduates from a range of backgrounds to enter an intensive programme of medical education. There are also many examples of the modernisation of higher education curricula which respond to changes in the requirements of the professions and employers but some universities and professional bodies have been slow to change.

Emerging questions

- 1a) What, are the statutory, cultural, historical or other barriers to entering your profession and remodelling the workforce in your professional area? What can be done to remove these barriers?
- 1b) How can professional bodies and employers develop effective links with universities and other higher education institutions to modernise educational provision in ways that prepare graduates who are 'fit for purpose'?
- 1c) How can the professions draw on and address the needs of the growing pool of non-traditional learners eg mature students, women returners, career changers?
- 1d) There are a number of flexible delivery models available in higher education eg distance learning, e-learning and work based learning. What measures have been considered within your profession to address the needs of learners and employers?

Comments

1a) The main barrier to entry at present in the sciences may actually be a perception problem. Students who are taught science at GCSE may not be being taught by a chemist and may not be exposed to the full excitement and career opportunities that chemistry can undoubtedly offer. (see Smithers Chemistry Teachers Report (1) <http://www.rsc.org/pdf/education/teachers2004.pdf>). The facilities within schools for teaching science do not, in most cases, portray the fact that science and particularly chemistry is a fundamental and developing subject which plays a critical role in the health, wellbeing and future of mankind and our country. (see CLEAPPS Laboratories, Resources and Budgets (2) <http://www.rsc.org/pdf/education/labreports2004.pdf>).

The RSC is working with regulatory authorities and the awarding bodies to modernise curricula in an attempt to alter perception. However much needs to be done to alter the careers advice given to young people.

1b) The RSC has very good links with universities and other higher education institutions and has an extensive programme of activities to support undergraduate and postgraduate students and lecturers in HE. (see Educational Activities for Professional Practice and Higher Education (3) http://www.chemsoc.org/networks/learnnet/ed_activitiespp.htm). We are currently working with SEMTA the Science, Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies Sector Skills Council and The Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI) to review needs of employers and current provision.

1c) In 2001 the RSC reviewed and changed its membership categories and requirements, RSC membership is now broader based recognising the broader footprint within employment where chemists are employed (specifically – materials, science, environmental, and chemistry/biology interface). (See The New Membership Structure(4) <http://www.rsc.org/pdf/members/rsc21cent.pdf> http://www.rsc.org/pdf/members/membership_briefing.pdf).

1d) The RSC recognises a wide range of routes into membership including professional experience. The RSC itself offers part time and distance learning courses (ACOL) as well as providing significant cpd events/activities. We support the development of distance learning courses.

Section D - Key Themes and Issues

2. Recruitment and Retention

Historically, many professions have found that they can recruit well from a pool of highly qualified candidates. Indeed, for some the problem is how to select from a pool of equally qualified candidates. These same professions often have difficulties in widening participation and securing a truly representative work-force. There have been concerns expressed about the 'feminisation' of some professions and other professions have concerns about the social mix of their recruits. A particular frustration in some professions is that their recruitment is, in reality, decided by universities and other higher education institutions who offer a limited pool of first degree places in professionally related disciplines.

However, even in over-subscribed professions, there can be particular recruitment problems in certain niches within the profession. In veterinary science, for example, fewer people want to do large animal work in rural areas and in the legal profession there are concerns about recruitment to law centres. In a number of professions like architecture and social care there are worries that recruits will not be able to afford to work in the public and voluntary sectors when variable fees are introduced unless salaries or other incentives compensate for the increased debt.

In other professions there are reported recruitment problems and concerns expressed about the quality of the pool of available, well-qualified, candidates. A range of science and engineering professions have raised issues about the number of pupils studying mathematics and science post-16 and are working with the Government on strategies to remedy this. A related concern is that of professional skills shortages in universities can impact significantly on the quality of graduates. The quality of the academic infra-structure is intrinsic to the quality of graduates entering the professions.

Recruitment problems for some areas of teaching are being addressed by a well-targeted range of incentives but concerns have also been expressed about the future arrangements for incentives schemes in the context of variable fees. Some of these professions, which are experiencing recruitment problems, also feel the need to do more to promote the image of their profession with young people in schools.

Retention problems have also been raised as a concern for some professions. A lack of clear career progression, failure to offer good continuing professional development and failure to pay competitive salaries have all been offered as reasons for retention problems. This may be a particular issue for professions that offer initial incentives and high quality early career training but then offer little continued support. It may also be the case that overall pay levels for some professions will not be competitive enough to sustain the recruitment and retention of high quality staff.

Emerging questions

- 2a) How can professions improve planning to identify gaps in recruitment and retention?
- 2b) How is your profession affected by any shortages in the supporting academic infrastructure? How does this affect the availability and quality of courses and the quality of graduates from these courses?
- 2c) What examples do you have of recruitment problems in specific disciplines as a result of financial factors relating either to the costs of higher education, poor starting salaries or limited opportunities for career progression?
- 2d) What examples do you have of financial or other measures to attract and retain a professional workforce?
- 2e) How can the public sector sustain and improve recruitment opportunities for graduates?

Comments

2(a) One area of concern is the age profile of the chemistry teaching force in schools. The RSC has commissioned a report on this and is working with the DfES on a further study. (see Smithers Chemistry Teachers Report (1)).

2b) The recent closure of several chemistry departments across the UK has resulted in lack of provision and diversity of provision in certain areas of the country. With the introduction of fees and the likelihood of students wishing to stay close to home this could be a major inhibiting factor for those wishing to study chemistry both on a full time and particularly part time basis.

2c) We are also hearing that pharmaceutical companies are now actively recruiting large numbers of chemistry graduates from continental Europe. One area of significant concern is the Public Analyst. Poor salary and lack of progression routes mean that very able graduates are not attracted to this area. This is often a quality as well as a quantity issue.

The RSC are currently looking at undertaking some labour market intelligence on the current and future need for chemists.

The other area of recruitment problems is in specialist teaching of chemistry at school level.

2d) The "golden hellos" and bursary schemes that the TTA put in place have helped to increase recruitment into shortage subjects such as science but at present there is not enough information to identify the number of science teachers that are chemists. However the proposed introduction of fees for PGCE courses will be counter productive. See recent report commissioned by RSC (1) <http://www.rsc.org/pdf/education/teachers2004.pdf>

The RSC, in partnership with the Institute of Physics (IoP), has commissioned an independent report from Pricewaterhouse Coopers on the economic returns to both the individual and to the state from studying various degree subjects. The report The Economic Benefits of Higher Education Qualification is attached (5). <http://www.rsc.org/pdf/policy/PWCreport05.pdf>. The report shows that, in today's terms, the value to the individual of completing a degree is £129,000 more than non-graduates with similar backgrounds which translates into a 12.1% annual rate of return over a life-time of earnings. The rate of return for chemistry graduates is higher at 15.0%; as is the case for physics (14.9%) and engineering (15.5%). The rate of return (based upon increased tax revenues) to the State for the investment in providing these courses is 12.1% for chemistry graduates; 13.0% for physics, and 13.1% for engineering. Therefore, directed allocation of increased resources to science courses would lead to increased returns to the state and the individual: consideration only of the short-term cash cost neglects the long-term gains that the Government will receive and the future economic needs. For the first time there is clear evidence of the economic benefits from studying science and engineering in HE: while the short term cash costs are high the overall cash return to the individual and to the state more than repay the initial investment.

2e) Some public sector organisations have suffered poor recruitment and retention of chemists. Some have adopted the strategy of recruiting at an earlier age taking students with A levels and offering them day release opportunities to further academic study.

Section D - Key Themes and Issues

3. Careers choices

The issue of careers guidance in schools has been raised as being important across a range of professions. There are some concerns in relation to the image presented of different professions, others are focused on young people understanding the reality of working in different professions and in different areas within these professions. It is unrealistic to expect individual careers advisors, careers teachers and sixth form tutors to have in-depth knowledge of all the different options, progression routes and course requirements within every profession and there is a clear role for professional bodies, employers, universities and other higher education institutions to support good career choices within schools.

For individual young people a range of social, psychological and economic factors influence their career choices. In order to understand this area in depth work has been commissioned to review the academic literature with a bearing on this issue. It is planned to publish this research alongside the main report. Research on entry to the professions in other countries where there is experience of university fees is also being reviewed.

Emerging questions

3a) How can professional bodies and employers best work with schools and other 14-19 providers to promote a better understanding of different professions?

3b) How well does the advice and guidance given in schools meet the needs of your profession? What could be done to improve this?

3c) How do you collect evidence of client/patient/student perceptions of your profession?

3d) Do you have any specific initiatives to promote a positive image of your profession?

Comments

3a) The RSC has an extensive range of careers information and provides a wide range of activities, events and resource materials to support chemistry within schools. Much of this support will help 14-19 providers to gain a better insight into the work of a professional chemist. e.g. Chemistry at Work, Industry Study Tours.

3b) The RSC is working with the Science Council to develop a Careers from Science website. Careers advice in schools is not delivered in the main by people with a deep understanding of careers from Science. It could be improved by including some elements in the science curriculum.

3c) The RSC and its members put considerable effort into promoting chemical science based careers both within schools and the higher education system. We are advised by client groups and their teachers and lecturers.

3d) We have a very active press office which continually looks for positive stories to put in the media.

In 2004 RSC co-ordinated a bid for funding for HEFCE national Aimhigher funding (6) <http://www.rsc.org/outreach>. The project was funded with nearly £1m and is called "Chemistry: The Next Generation". The consortium from the chemistry community includes 12 HEI's, 3 pharmaceutical companies, 2 Sector Skills Councils and the RSC. The project aims are to: -

1. Develop and deliver activities and materials that excite and motivate students in schools and colleges to take up undergraduate courses in chemical sciences.
2. Initiate effective regional and national collaboration between universities, and between universities and industry on outreach activities and widening participation as it is being developed through regional and area Aimhigher partnerships.
3. Ensure that universities have access to resource at the subject level to address the Aimhigher objectives, in particular targeting schools and colleges and other students that are currently underrepresented.

Three regions will be targeted in the first instance – the East Midlands, London and the North West. These regions have been selected because of their social profiles relative to the Aimhigher agenda and the distribution of HEIs and chemistry related industries within them. A full national roll-out of the programme will follow.

This project provides a unique opportunity for direct cooperation between schools, colleges, universities and industry and will demonstrate to students' progression routes in the chemical sciences.

There are numerous other activities that take place from the RSC Education Department.

The RSC also organises a Chemistry Week biannually, this years theme is "Know Chemistry".

3e) Within Chemistry, career choices are very diverse so providing definitive progression routes is difficult. We have a number of career profiles which demonstrate some specific routes that some chemists have taken (7) <http://www.rsc.org/lap/educatio/profiles/index.htm>

Section D - Key Themes and Issues

4. Widening participation

In section one, widening participation was discussed in relation to flexible learning opportunities and alternative entry routes. However, issues of widening the professional workforce go far beyond this. There is evidence to suggest that the more prestigious and well-paid a profession is, the more likely it is to be dominated by people whose families are from higher social classes and by men (with the exception of some medically related professions). In recent research into graduate employment Elias and Purcell [Elias, P & Purcell, K (2004) *Researching Graduate Careers Seven Years On: The Earnings of Graduates in their Early Careers*. IER/ESRU] also found that the pay of women professionals was consistently lower than for men, even when factors such as public/private sector, hours of work and careers breaks had been taken into account. Variable fees throw up issues of cost versus likely benefits. Some parts of the community are more averse to debt and some professions are less attractive than others.

A number of professions are putting considerable effort into widening participation but clearly there is more to be done to ensure that students are selected on merit and potential. Good work is being done to widen participation in entry to medical schools where considerable progress has been made and many universities have adopted good practice in relation to outreach work, summer schools for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and work experience schemes.

Emerging Questions

4a) How can we ensure that there is a socially diverse professional workforce which represents the wider community?

4b) How can the professions maintain the progress that has been made in this area in the variable fees environment?

4c) Have you any examples of good practice in this area you could share with other professions?

Comments

4a) As described in 3d the RSC and members of the chemistry community from industry and higher education are actively working together to try and ensure that there is a socially diverse professional workplace.

4b) Encouraging universities to provide bursaries based on subject chosen will help to ensure that students from all backgrounds continue to take chemical science courses. If Government wish to address the issue of strategic subjects then consideration should be given to earmarking funding for bursaries for these subjects.

4c) On the RSC website we have collected together all the information relating to awards, sponsorships and scholarships for chemical science degree students (8)
http://www.chemsoc.org/networks/learnnet/awards_uni.htm.

We also believe that a very positive step would be for companies to offer "golden hellos" to chemists. This has proved successful in the case of teaching and will be even more important as student debt increases after 2006.

Section D – Key Themes and Issues

5. Any other issues

Are there any other issues relating to the challenge of providing clear, accessible gateways to the professions which need to be examined in the context of introducing variable fees in universities in England from 2006?

Comments:

The most significant barrier is the absence, or potential absence of course provision at the local level and by the nature of the provision. A number of universities have discontinued provision following individual decisions driven by national funding policies. Closures have been in spite of evident demand from applicants for places. With a few notable exceptions, chemistry as an undergraduate subject is now only offered by research intensive universities and the courses provided reflect that mission.

For there to be access to the profession for all, chemical science needs to be provided in local institutions and this needs to be a diversity of provision to meet the needs of students, and the wide range of career opportunities in addition to the R&D mission so successfully fulfilled by the research intensive universities. There is no longer a ladder of part-time and diploma courses leading both to employment and entry to degree courses. Unless the remaining provision is protected, enhanced at the local level, and diversity increased, implementation of measures arising out of this consultation will have little effect.

Section E - Next Steps

These consultation questions form part of the review and analysis that is being undertaken to ensure that the Gateways to the Professions report takes account of the views of the many and varied stakeholders with an interest in this matter.

An electronic version of this questionnaire is available on the Gateways to the Professions website at:

www.dfes.gov.uk/hegateway/herereform/gatewaystotheprofessions

Responses should reach the Gateways to the Professions team by **18 March 2005**. Email responses should be sent to: gateways.professions-consultation@dfes.gsi.gov.uk

Postal responses should be sent to the following address:

Linda Gibbs
HE Employer Engagement Division
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N4 Moorfoot
Sheffield S1 4PQ

If you have any queries on the content of this questionnaire, please contact the Gateways to the Professions team on 0114 259 1633

The information you send us may be passed to colleagues and/or published in a summary of responses received in response to the questions above. We will assume you are content for us to do this, and that if you are replying by email, your consent overrides any confidentiality disclaimer that is generated by your organisation's IT system, unless you specifically include a request to the contrary.

DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Higher Education Reform

The Secretary of State for Education and Skills (Mr. Charles Clarke): I stated in the House on the 27th January that I was commissioning a report to examine the gateways into the professions. I am pleased to announce the appointment of Sir Alan Langlands, VC of the University of Dundee, to lead this work.

Sir Alan will act as an independent person to oversee the report which will examine how the public sector and the professions can sustain and improve recruitment opportunities for graduates, especially those who do not qualify for the full £3000 support, and, to make recommendations to Ministers on action that can be taken by the employing organisations to provide clear accessible gateways for all graduates who want to pursue such careers and which will benefit the recruitment needs of these sectors.

The report will cover mainly the public sector but will also look at good practice in the private sector and will include those who work in a professional capacity in the voluntary sector. Additionally there will be reference groups established, one for each sector and with voluntary sector representation on each group.

On the public sector, the report will analyse support that is currently available, (through bursaries, golden hellos, fee payment and loan write-offs) its effectiveness and future plans for post autumn 2006. Furthermore it will assess whether these (plus any changes) are likely to continue to work after autumn 2006; and whether there are any gaps in what is available which are likely to create recruitment and retention problems.

On the private sector, it will research current and possibly international practice on incentives for graduates, and assess how employers might respond in a variable fees environment;

I am asking Sir Alan to start this work after Royal Assent this year with the aim of reporting to me by mid-2005.

GATEWAYS TO THE PROFESSIONS : REFERENCE GROUP MEMBERS

Sir Alan Langlands Gateways to the Professions

PUBLIC SECTOR GROUP

Paul Cottrell	Association of University Teachers
Dr Sam Everington	British Medical Association
Sue Martin	British Dental Association
Karl Demian	Legal Services Commission
Rob Pinkham	Local Government Association
Liz Allen	NATFHE
Elizabeth Eddy	NHS Employers
Safron Rose	NSPCC
Dr Arthur Naylor	Standing College of Principals (SCOP)
Michael Day	Teacher Training Agency
Heather Wakefield	UNISON (representing the TUC)
Prof Geoff White	Universities & Colleges Employers Association
Vivienne Rivis	Universities UK
Brandon Ashworth	Sector Skills Development Agency
Steve Hynes	Law Centres Federation
Dr Shirley Bach	Institute of Nursing and Midwifery (representing the Royal College of Nursing)

PRIVATE SECTOR GROUP

Mike Robinson	AMICUS (representing the TUC)
Richard Shearman	Engineering Council UK
Janet Berkman	Engineering Employers Federation
Anne Farquharson	Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland (representing the Association of Graduate Recruiters)
Julie Swan	The Law Society
Janet Fleming	NCVO
Freda Andrews	Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons
Simon Allford	Royal Institute of British Architects
John Baxter	Royal Academy of Engineering
Carolyn Smith	IIP UK
Katherine Heron	SCHOSA