

The Second Convention for Higher Education

The HE Green Paper:

The threat to the Public University ...and what we can do about it



Saturday 27 February, 10am-5pm
University College London

Confirmed speakers include: Lee Jones (Campaign for the Public University) on the TEF, Liz Morrish on Performance Management, Liz Lawrence (UCU President) on Private Providers and Terry Brotherstone (UCU Scotland) on Governance.

Prof Roger Brown (Council for the Defence of British Universities), Natalie Fenton (Goldsmiths UCU), Joanna De Groot (UCU HE Chair), John Holmwood (CPU) and Prof Martin McQuillan (CDBU).

See overleaf for the provisional timetable ⇒

Hosted by University College London UCU, supported by the CPU and UCU.
For more information and to register go to <http://heconvention2.wordpress.com>

The Second Convention for Higher Education

Why do we need a Convention?

The consultation on the Conservative Government's Green Paper on Higher Education, *Fulfilling our Potential*, closed on Friday 15 January. Any reader of the Green Paper would be perplexed at the risks of the proposals for the sector, and the weakness of arguments in their favour. It is easy to be simultaneously worried by the threat and astounded by the lack of rigour in the document.

The Green Paper makes a number of radical proposals for the future of HE in England and Wales, including an elaborate new metric-based *Teaching Excellence Framework*; the replacement of funding councils and quality assurance bodies by a unitary *Office for Students*; and the fast-tracking of applications by private providers to recruit fee-paying students and brand themselves a University.

In isolation, these measures might appear incoherent. Together, they have a single purpose – to make it as straightforward as possible for private companies to enter the HE sector and access UK Government-backed tuition fees. By breaking with peer-review quality assurance, the TEF is a mechanism for this agenda.

The interests of private commercial providers with little or no track record in education are thereby placed above those of existing universities and their staff. The Green Paper policies risk a race to the bottom, where the ethos of the university sector – premised on academic freedom and rigorous debate – is simply abandoned in the struggle to recruit high fee-paying students.

- **What are we going to do about this threat?**
- **What is at stake for society?**
- **How should the UK scientific and academic community respond?**
- **What is our alternative?**

The Second Convention for HE is an opportunity to begin to develop answers to these questions, and to develop links and informal organisation to promote debate, to resist the Green Paper's narrow vision, and to develop alternatives.

If you care about the future of Higher Education, join us at UCL on 27 February.

Provisional Timetable

10.00-10.30	Welcome
10.30-11.45	Teaching quality, social mobility and the TEF – The rise of metrics and the uncapping of fees
11.45-13.00	Opening the market to private providers – Easy come, easy go? Measure anything, fail everyone? – The growth of the 'performance management' agenda
13.00-14.00	<i>break</i>
14:00-15.15	Deregulation, the attack on governance and statutes – Is academic freedom under threat? The future of research
15.15-16.30	Strategies to win – <i>How do we defend the Public University?</i>
16.30-17.00	Conclusions and next steps