

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, SPORT AND CULTURE
BY DEPUTY J.M. MAÇON OF ST. SAVIOUR
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 17th NOVEMBER 2015**

Question

On page 26 of the 'Skills for Success' document (R.61/2014) reference is made to 5 particular objectives that would need to be achieved in order to "continue to provide financial support for students studying towards a first degree and encourage the development of degree courses on island that meet employer demand for local graduates and bring benefits to the individual, the community and the economy". Could the Minister advise at what stage his department is with regard to these objectives and whether there are target dates for completion?

Answer

Work in all these areas is ongoing and continuously reviewed to ensure the department can consider and respond, if necessary, to policy changes imposed by the UK government. It is still the case that approximately 95% of Jersey students chose universities in the UK, the majority in England.

1. ESC officers hold regular annual meetings with Universities UK, the body that represents higher education establishments, and the UK Department of Business, Innovation and Skills. Jersey works closely with the other Crown Dependencies – Guernsey and the Isle of Man – to discuss the impact of policy changes and make representations if necessary. In recent years, successful negotiations have taken place to ensure Crown Dependencies students are charged the same fees as 'home' students. For first degrees, Imperial College and Cambridge Universities are the exceptions and discussions are ongoing in conjunction with the Jersey Cambridge Society. Finance issues are being addressed through workshops with parents and discussions with the Treasury and private sector. Following the MTFP debate, a report is due to be presented to the States by the end of the first quarter of 2016.
2. There are degree courses in ten subject areas at Highlands College, which is funded through the ESC department. These include business management, financial services, and construction, and IT for business. All existing degrees have been developed in conjunction with local business sectors with the aim of filling skills gaps. Work to identify other courses is ongoing under the new Principal and management team. Since the strategy was written in 2014, two new degree courses have been introduced at Highlands as well as a nursing degree run by Health and Social Services in conjunction with Chester University.
3. Higher education issues are considered as part of the Skills Board's wider work. It has reviewed the needs of the digital sector, construction, finance and leadership and management. A hospitality review has been conducted in 2015 and will be published shortly. The Skills Board also undertakes an annual review of local higher education provision and uptake, which is fed into skills planning and has, for instance resulted in the alignment of IT degree courses to industry requirements.
4. For students of all ages, distance learning through the Open University and other recognised providers is funded through Student Finance. Adult learners are also a key target audience for the on-island degrees. Other courses exist where the need for specialist training or skills has been identified. The Jersey Graduate Teacher Training Programme is an example of this.
In vocational areas, Trackers – The Apprentice Programme - caters for a wide age range of adult trainees who want to acquire professional qualifications that are directly relevant to their career. Among others, a digital apprenticeship scheme has recently been introduced in response to industry requests.

5. The ESC department liaises with all providers of education and is in the process of exploring options for more distance learning, including the model used by Gibraltar University and other providers. A new education business partnership to further engage with industry and other training providers is currently in the planning phase.