

UK higher education and the student experience

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SUs

Strategy

- Boards and the “long term”

But:

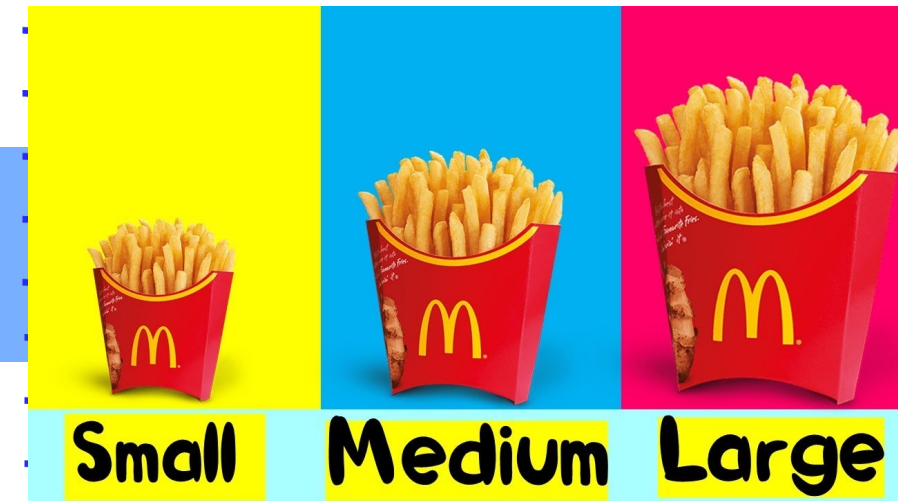
- **Volatile:** quick actions needed to events outside your control
- **Uncertain:** future unclear and non- predictable
- **Complex:** Dynamic networks with confusing/conflicting relationships
- **Ambiguous:** Action without certainty of outcome



It's the medium that matters

When the pressure is on and the environment is chaotic or uncertain, leaders tend towards:

- **Small issues:** Micro management, generates feelings of control. But what about the big picture?
- **Huge issues:** Collective, long term things that need attention, **but...**
- Also a way of avoiding accountability over the “hard” stuff – **medium** issues that require the most attention, response and decision



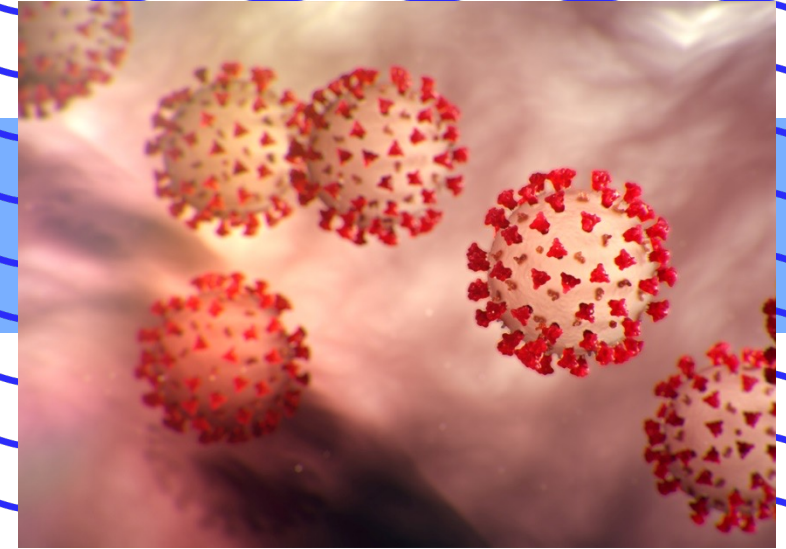


A story about disability

- Legislation – reasonable adjustments
- Student has disability or not?
- Which condition(s)
- Nature of programme
- Relationship between those – barriers
- Fixes
- Enforcement of fixes with academics
 - Data and strategy?

Background

- Introduction of £9,000 fees in 2010
- Removal of number caps in 2012
- Resource unit doesn't grow (much)
- Encouragement to grow international
- No central planning at all



Pendulum swings

- Too many people for to university
- Too many live away from home
- University as personal and death of community (Covid reveal)
- Mental health
- Outcomes?

Austerity

- Treasury (as of today) reverting to austerity of 2010s.
- Less fat to cut and higher education can't escape through a loan trick any more

Four options:

1. Fewer students go to university
2. Graduates pay more back through the loan scheme (inc existing graduates)
3. Reduced academic delivery costs
4. Reduced maintenance costs



Politics

- Hostile to universities, young, diversity, “culture wars” and other SU hobby horses and values
- Highly unstable – risk taking in wrong direction swings to deep freezes (and both fiscal and policy drag)
- Unable to address contemporary issues of the day (social media and impacts on political debate and harassment, housing crisis etc)
- Essay crisis culture – wait til very bad and throw plasters and money
- Coping mechanisms become features



Responding to change

	Confrontation	Retreat
Radical	Anti Globalisation Students, ethnic minorities Left populism	New age Downshifting
Reactionary	Rural protests Right national populism: Europe	Melancholy Nostalgia

Responding to change

	Confrontation	Retreat
Radical	Adapt entrepreneurially Create new business models Very risky	As long as what I do doesn't change I don't mind what is going on around me
Reactionary	Get back to basics but with a vengeance, cut costs, streamline Very tough	Do you remember the old days when things were so much better?

Organisations of change

- Adaptive, nimble, agile organisations able to learn fast about environment around them, sense opportunities and mobilise resources to exploit them
- But organisations that just do that would be in perpetual turmoil, constantly reinventing themselves
- So as well as being adaptive, nimble and agile organisations need to have a sense of stability, continuity and purpose
- But a sense of stability that does not inhibit ability to adapt
- What does that optimum mix of stability and flux come from?
- **It comes from challenging conventional wisdom**

Students

- More of them
- More diverse
- Less time
- More anxious
- More collaborative (yet)
- Lonely
- Busy and less “immersed”



Outcomes

- Continuation, Completion and Progression
- Plus others (learning gain, confidence)
- Why are the numbers the way they are?
- Coverage at course level



Belonging

- Size and diversity of courses
- Identity and social capital
 - Housing
 - Hobbies
 - Characteristics
 - Subject/Course?
- Intervening at course level but retaining student led approach?



Activities model

- Clubs and societies dominate
- Projects
- Initiatives
- Events
- Festivals
- Services
- Social enterprises
- Sprints



Employment

- Curriculum, co-curricular or extracurricular?
- (Note education model problems)
- Work experience
- Application
- Appraisal
- Supervision and management



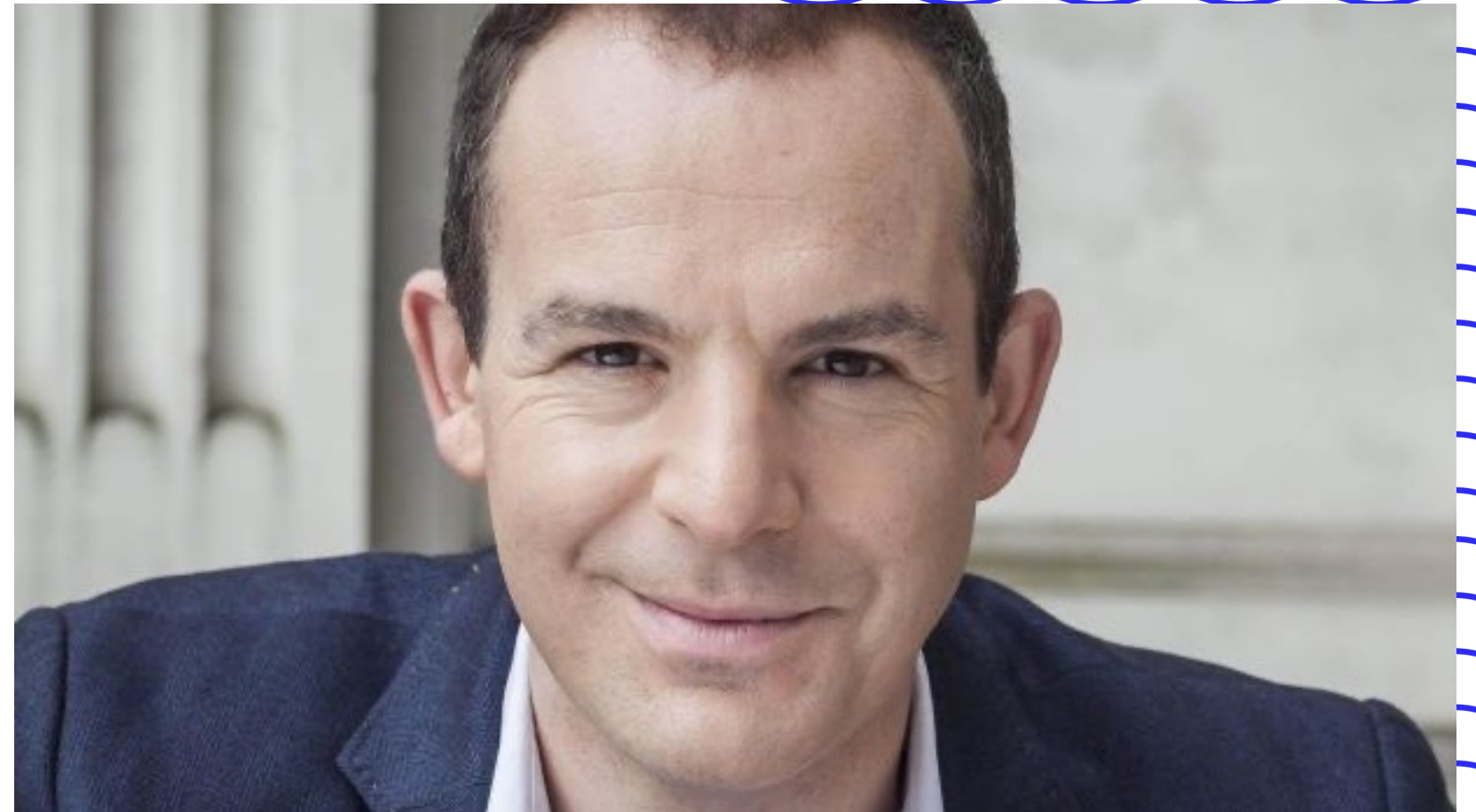
Diversity

- Integration not assimilation
- Single points of failure
- Infrastructure v behaviour
- Risks to equality of opportunity
- Community development



Rights

- TikTok
- Martin Lewis
- International development
- Minimums and entitlements
- Quality enhancement



Cost of living

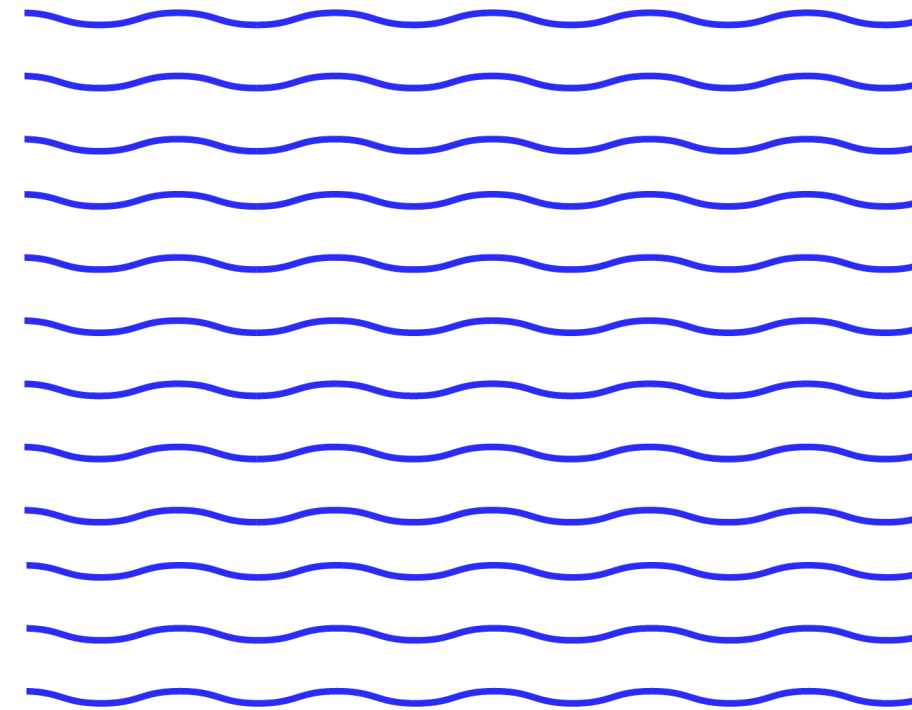
- Increase in in year drop out (SLC)
- Maintenance failing to keep up
- Part-time work
- Food insecurity and food banks
- Rent and housing costs



1

B3 and TEF Dashboards

- Metrics and splits, plus thresholds for B3 now published (Continuation, Completion, Progression)
- TEF Metrics and splits, plus performance against benchmark now published (Continuation, Completion, Progression PLUS Teaching, A&F, Learning Support, Resources, Voice)



2

Housing shortage

- Major student cities across the world impacted
- Post-Covid living
- Landlords selling up as interest rates increase
- (Regulation as a red herring)
- PGT expansion plus Graduate Route visa
- Strategy for cities?
- Residential model (and Denmark?)
- Figures on types of housing by provider



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Free speech

- Culture wars over race and trans issues
- Censorious students and social media
- Failure to demonstrate role in debate and free speech



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University finances

Unit of resource freeze plus inflation

- Energy fix?
- Demand smoothing – increases in module and class sizes and reduction in module choice
- Pathway closure – killing off or merging/collapsing modules
- International PGT recruitment
- New briefing up on expansion (sustainable?)



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International students

- PG arrivals with dependents set to be targeted (possibly prior to transfer to graduate route)
- Braverman:

We've also got a very high number of students coming into this country and we've got a really high number of dependents.

So students are coming on their student visa, but they're bringing in family members who can piggyback onto their student visa.

Those people are coming here, they're not necessarily working or they're working in low skilled jobs, and they're not contributing to growing our economy."

We want people with high skills, we want people with tech qualifications...What we don't want is a very steady stream of cheap foreign labour.

- Modern slavery? Rights at work.
- Hardship and recourse to public funds
- Currency fluctuation
- Outward migration (Turing and Taith)



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Access and participation

New approach from John Blake (former OUSU President...)

- “Risks” of not delivering quality of opportunity
- National risk register (due regard to...)
- Local APP will have to assess risks and propose mitigations
- Wider equality duties



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Sexual violence

Statement of expectations due any day now

- Spiking guidance out (awaiting decision on licensing from Home Office)
- NDAs pledge continues (When is an NDA not an NDA)
- New legal guidance from Universities UK out
- Prevalence and evidence gathering?



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Mental health

- Bristol will appeal in the Abrahart case so learning delayed
- Parents have launched campaign to establish a formal “duty of care”
- UUK have guidance out on:
 - Contacting family and other loved ones in event of serious issue (but what counts as serious issue and whose job to notice?)
 - Before, during and return from placements



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