

01:38:44 Livia Scott: Hi everyone! Welcome to the webinar. Just a note to say we encourage questions, conversations and comments in the chat throughout 😊

01:42:47 Debbie McVitty: Here's a link to the Connect More report <https://wonkhe.com/blogs/connect-more-creating-the-conditions-for-a-more-resilient-and-sustainable-he-sector-in-england/>

01:43:54 Dean Morley: Apologies if already mentioned, but will slides be shared?

01:44:03 Debbie McVitty: Yes absolutely!

01:44:33 Dean Morley: 👍

01:46:53 b96335bv: To what extent can / would the government find a form of words that might reassure banks and avoid overly restrictive lending rates / requirements. While I recognise Government won't want to in anyway guarantee the borrowing, if borrowing becomes overly restricted than it would increase the demands on the government to 'step in'.

01:49:46 Huw: There has been considerable speculation about the possible limits on collaboration as a consequence of Competition and Market Authority (CMA) regulations. Where is the boundary between cooperation and anti-competitive behaviour and is anyone really going to take action against universities that coordinate changes in their courses and other activities to reduce the adverse effects on students and local communities?

01:54:47 Debbie McVitty: Kate's view on competition: <https://wonkhe.com/blogs/competition-law-is-a-constraint-to-collaboration-in-he-but-it-need-not-be-an-impediment/>

01:54:51 Mike Ratcliffe City St Georges: The FE merger wave did appear to be part of a strategy, not sure if we have reached that stage in English HE...

02:02:36 Caroline Roberts: If the sector was to explore partnerships with LAs and FEs, would that be based on the One Public Estate principles?

02:03:01 Huw: Research in the corporate sector suggests that between 50 and 90% of mergers fail to achieve their objectives. A DfE review of mergers in the FE sector a few years ago found no evidence of improvement in performance.

02:05:45 Huw: Page 13 of the following DfE report (2019) summarises the research on FE mergers [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5f202521e90e071a58f9a820/The\\_impact\\_of\\_college\\_mergers\\_in\\_FE.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5f202521e90e071a58f9a820/The_impact_of_college_mergers_in_FE.pdf)

02:08:30 Debbie McVitty: Here's Holly's account of the merger: <https://wonkhe.com/blogs/planning-a-market-exit/>

02:15:40 Caroline Roberts: For James, did your merger principles have student experience as the golden thread?

02:16:34 Sarah-Louise Dietz (GW4 Alliance): So far the discussion is around large-scale collaborative projects/mergers. To what extent are smaller-scale collaborations going to be encouraged and desirable, e.g. individual research group collaborations, sharing institutional resources, not as a prequel to a merger but as an end in itself, pooling expertise and resource regionally within the sector? Such enterprises face similar challenges around policy, culture, competition etc.

02:20:49 Howard Goffin: Great to hear success stories given

that some Shared Services (non HE context) have seen a negative stigma attached to them. <https://www.nao.org.uk/reports/government-shared-services/?nab=0>

02:23:32 James Rolfe: Caroline – yes, it was a specific workstream within the overall project. We spoke to students, and the SUs. We spent a lot of time ensuring student support (wellbeing etc) was properly embedded within the overall ARU model. We also needed to ensure that under 18 yo safeguarding (ie FE) was properly covered, as it is more specific and demanding than over 18yo safeguarding. Finally, we have fundamentally overhauled catering (ie a short term improvement), based on feedback from students (many of whom work outdoors, so catering was particularly important for them).

02:25:17 Caroline Roberts: Thanks James!

02:26:19 James Rolfe: re: University governance. We have been very fortunate to have a supportive Board from the outset. On the Writtle merger, we established a Board sub-group to keep them in the picture on the week to week detail, with only significant issues being escalated to the main board.

02:26:42 b96335bv: Interesting that government having firm support for the merger is credited with being a key factor for the success of the Anglia Ruskin and Writtle merger. That would suggest that a vision for the types of collaboration and merger the government is looking to 'sponsor' would be a helpful development rather than an unwelcome intervention.

02:31:34 Livia Scott: Kate's article in case folks didn't see Debbie posting it earlier: <https://wonkhe.com/blogs/competition-law-is-a-constraint-to-collaboration-in-he-but-it-need-not-be-an-impediment/>

02:37:17 Sarah-Louise Dietz (GW4 Alliance): Thank you this was fantastic.

02:37:28 Susan Wilde – Edge Hill Uni: Thank you

02:37:34 Livia Scott: Links, recording and slides will be in your inbox in t minus one hour!

02:37:38 b96335bv: Thanks all.

02:37:40 Melissa: Thank you all

02:37:41 Sawsan Khuri: Thank you!

02:37:44 Shona Brown: Yes – many thanks very thoughtful

02:37:45 Edward Hicks: Thank you!

02:37:55 tadebiyi: Thank you!