



## BRIEFING PAPER

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# University Technical Colleges

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## Summary Briefing

University Technical Colleges (UTCs) are schools introduced by the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition Government, originally for 14-19 year olds, that work alongside employers and universities to deliver technical education and core curriculum subjects. Most students join UTCs aged 14, but it is expected that any new UTCs will run from 11 to 18. UTCs operate as a type of academy in England. This means that they do not have to follow the national curriculum or employ teachers with qualified teacher status (apart from in certain circumstances such as Special Educational Needs Coordinators).

In October 2019, The National Audit Office published its [Investigation into University Technology Colleges](#). It provided a survey of UTCs in 2019:

### Number of UTCs

- As of 1 October 2019, 48 UTCs were open across England. A total of 58 UTCs have opened since the first in September 2011, but 10 have subsequently closed. 17 UTCs were open by 2013/14, 37 by 2015/16, and 49 by 2017/18. One further UTC is due to open in September 2020 and one to close in August 2020 (pp. 14-15).
- Of the 10 UTCs that closed to October 2019, 6 were transferred to other academy trusts, 1 site returned to a local authority, 1 gifted to a university, and 2 were awaiting a decision (p.5).

### Department Spending

- The Department for Education (DfE) spent £792 million on the UTC programme from 2010/11 to 2018/19, 85% of which was on capital grants (p.7).

### Student Profile

- In January 2019 the 48 open UTCs were operating, on average, at 45% capacity, with 13,572 students. The 10 UTCs that have closed were around 25% full on average in the two years before closing (p.5).
- 72% of students in UTCs were male, compared with 50% in all secondary academies and free schools (p.11).

### Educational Performance

- As at August 2019, Ofsted rated 52% of UTCs as good or outstanding, compared to 76% of all secondary schools. (p.8).
- After GCSEs or equivalent, 9% of UTC students progressed into sustained apprenticeship (national average was 5%), and 4% entered employment (national average 3%). After A Levels or equivalent, 21% of UTC students moved to a sustained apprenticeship (national average 6%), 20% moved to sustained employment (national average 22%) and 38% went on to higher education (national average 50%) (p. 8).

- In [response to the NAO report](#), the Baker-Dearing Trust said that “more can be done to increase student numbers at some UTCs, [and] the strong track record of students destinations after leaving all UTCs is proof the programme is working”.

### The Baker-Dearing Trust

The Baker Dearing Trust is a charity which was set up by Lord Baker in 2010. The charity “assists with the selection of potential UTCs for DfE approval and then [helps] each UTC prepare for opening... in particular by liaising between the sponsors and the DfE”. It charges UTCs a membership fee of £10,000.

Charity Commission, [Baker Dearing Educational Charity Trust](#)

### Commentary

In February 2017, the former Education Secretary Michael Gove stated that UTCs “had failed because of their lack of academic rigour” and dividing education at 14 had not worked (*The Times*, [10 February 2017](#)). The former Chancellor, George Osborne, told the Education Select Committee in 2018 that the UTC model of starting at 14 “worked very well in some cases, but it clearly has not worked in others” (Education Select Committee, [Oral Evidence: Education in the North](#), HC 819, 2 May 2018, Q11).

### Improvement Plans since 2017

A three-year improvement programme was begun by the DfE in September 2017. This included allowing UTCs to apply to align their age range more closely with other secondary schools, if there is a need for additional school places in the area. From 2017, local authorities have a [statutory duty](#) to raise awareness of schools with an atypical age range. From January 2018 schools have had a [statutory duty](#) to allow UTC representatives to visit them to inform pupils about technical education.

In February 2019, Lord Baker and the then-Minister for the Schools System Lord Agnew wrote to the leaders of UTCs recommending that they join multi-academy Trusts in order to aid recruitment and financial stability. 20 of the then-50 open UTCs in March 2019 were already part of multi-academy trusts ([FE Week](#), 15 March 2019). Membership of a multi-academy trust formed part of the new [Memorandum of Understanding](#) between the DfE and the Baker Dearing Trust in June 2019.

Lord Baker also [stated](#) in October 2019 that “any new [UTCs] that come along will go from 11 to 18”, in an attempt to increase recruitment and close the gender gap.

The current Chair of the Baker-Dearing Trust, Simon Connell, stated his priority for the next three years was filling existing UTCs, rather than opening new ones ([FE Week](#), 14 September 2019).

The Public Accounts Committee in June 2020 said that “it is not clear what [the DfE’s] vision is for UTCs in the future” and it should prepare to close those which do not meet financial targets. The Committee also called upon the DfE to do more increase occupancy, improve their financial sustainability and assess the value of the fee paid to the Baker-Dearing Trust ([University Technical Colleges](#), 10 June 2020, pp 3,5).

# 1. The development and role of UTCs

## 1.1 Conception

In 2009, the Labour Government expressed an intention through the [National Skills Strategy](#) to support the development of University Technical Colleges (UTCs).<sup>1</sup> This followed proposals by the former Conservative Education Secretary, Lord Baker, and Lord Dearing, an ex-civil servant, in the late 2000s.<sup>2</sup> The plans received support from both the then Labour Government<sup>3</sup> and the Conservative opposition.<sup>4</sup> The [Baker Dearing Educational Trust](#) now promotes and supports University Technical Colleges.

Subsequently, the [Coalition Programme for Government](#), published on 20 May 2010, proposed 'Technical Academies' as part of the new Government's plans to promote diversity in the school system and improve vocational education.<sup>5</sup>

In the 2016 Government White Paper, [Education Excellence Everywhere](#), the Government stated:

4.40 We are committed to ensuring there is a UTC within reach of every city so that increasing numbers of young people can benefit from this type of technical education. We will strengthen the programme through reforms to help UTCs with pupil recruitment and improve their educational and financial viability, including: targeting future UTC locations in areas without such provision within reach; flexibilities in admission arrangements; and an expectation that all UTCs should be part of strong partnerships with high performing secondary schools, such as MATs [Multi-Academy Trust].<sup>6</sup>

The Secretary of State for Education, Gavin Williamson, stated in October 2019 on a visit to Plymouth UTC, that:

We should never underestimate the importance and the power that technical qualifications have in terms of driving our economic performance. And UTCs, such as this one in Plymouth, are a perfect exemplar of what we need to be doing in the future.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> HC Deb, [Skills for Growth](#), cc 251-264, 11 November 2009.

<sup>2</sup> University Technical Colleges, ['The UTC Story'](#) (accessed 21 July 2020); 'Letter from Lord Baker', in [University Technical Colleges Brochure](#),

<sup>3</sup> ['Tory Lord Baker Joins Government on Reviving Technical Schools'](#), *The Guardian*, 30 August 2009; ['Labour plan to revive technical schools'](#), *The Telegraph*, 1 Sep 2009; [Labour Party Manifesto 2010](#) (2010), section 3:6.

<sup>4</sup> ['Conservatives plan 1950s-style technical schools'](#), *The Guardian*, 5 Oct 2009; [Conservative Party Manifesto 2010](#) (2010), p. 52.

<sup>5</sup> Cabinet Office, [The Coalition: our programme for government](#) (May 2010), p.29.

<sup>6</sup> Department for Education (DfE), [Education Excellence Everywhere](#) (2016), p.64.

<sup>7</sup> DfE, ['Education Secretary Gavin Williamson visited students at UTC Plymouth College'](#), Twitter, 9 October 2019.

## 1.2 What are UTCs?

### Purpose and Curriculum

The Department for Education (DfE) document on [how to apply to open a UTC](#) defines the purpose of UTCs as follows:

1.8 UTCs are all-ability and mixed sex state funded schools, independent of local authorities. They are not extensions of, or conversions from, existing provision, but new academies, typically with 500-800 pupils in Key stage 4 and Key stage 5. UTCs specialise in subjects that need modern, technical, industry-standard equipment, such as engineering and digital technologies, and teach these disciplines alongside business skills and a broad, general education.

1.9 Pupils integrate academic study with practical learning, studying core GCSEs alongside technical qualifications. The ethos and curriculum are designed with local and national employers who also provide support and work experience for pupils. UTCs are sponsored by a university and employers, and work in partnership with other educational providers, including those with strengths in the UTC's specialist subject areas. UTCs should provide progression routes into higher education or further learning in work. This includes apprenticeships and higher apprenticeships; some UTCs may wish to consider offering apprenticeships themselves as they become established or may wish to work in partnership with apprenticeship providers. UTCs are funded on a comparable basis to other state funded schools.<sup>8</sup>

The [overview of UTCs](#) provided by the UTC website sets out the balance between “technical” and “general” education:

In general, year 10/year 11 at a UTC involves around 40% technical study and in sixth form (year 12/13) this increases to about 60% technical. A large proportion of that will be practical. The balance for individual courses may vary depending on which subjects you're taking. Where possible, teachers will integrate work-ready skills as part of the curriculum so you can see the links that are so important to the work done in industry.<sup>9</sup>

The [UTC Guide to UTCs Brochure](#) describes the specialist focus of the colleges and the role of partnerships with employers and universities:

- A UTC curriculum includes one or two technical specialisms, which are linked to the skills gaps in the region. As well as their core academic subjects, students can study GCSEs, A Levels and technical qualifications matched to these specialisms (p.2).
- UTCs have a special focus on science, technology, engineering and maths subjects, and all their technical, academic and practical learning is designed to be applied in the workplace (p.2).
- Each UTC is backed by employers and a local university who work with staff to develop an innovative curriculum that gives students first-hand experience of what life is like after school (p.2).

<sup>8</sup> DfE, [University Technical Colleges: How to Apply](#) (October 2015), p. 6

<sup>9</sup> Baker Dearing Trust, ['UTCs FAQs'](#) (accessed 21 July 2020).

## 7 University Technical Colleges

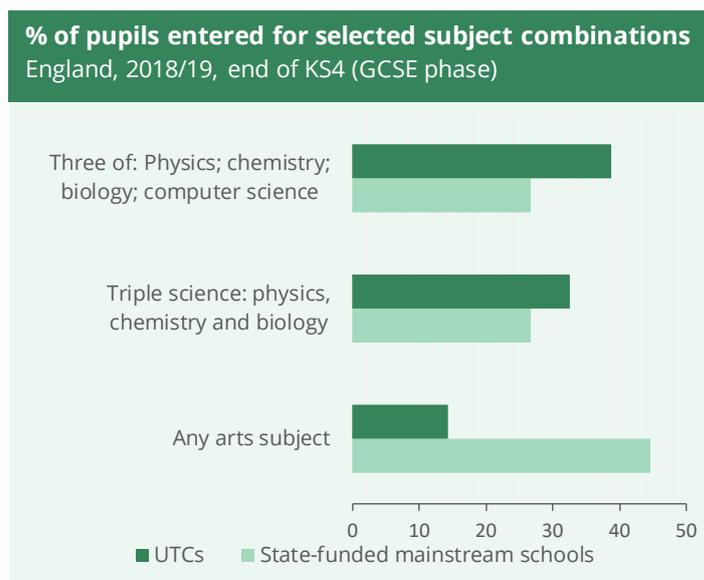
- UTCs are smaller than traditional secondary schools. They are not academically selective and charge no fees (p.2).
- As part of their study, students participate in projects with the UTC's employer partners in real working environments, where they can apply their technical skills and creative thinking (p.3).
- Thanks to their partnerships with employers and universities, UTCs have the latest equipment and technology used by industry, enabling them to teach technical and scientific subjects in a whole new way and inspire the inventors, engineers, scientists and technicians of tomorrow (p.5)
- UTCs are backed by more than 500 employers and nearly 50 universities (p.5).

The Government [published a list](#) of the sponsoring university and technical specialism for each open UTC in 2017, in response to a PQ (HL6508).

### Subject Take-Up

In 2018/19, 97.1% of UTC students were entered for both English and maths GCSEs. This was slightly lower than the national state-funded mainstream average, at 98.6%. 51.7% end-of-key stage 4 UTC pupils achieved a standard pass in both subjects - i.e., at grades 9 to 4. This was lower than the national state-funded mainstream average of pupils achieving a standard pass in both subjects, at 65.9%<sup>10</sup>

A higher proportion of UTC students took triple science GCSEs (Physics, Biology, and Chemistry) compared to the national state-funded mainstream average. However, a lower proportion of UTC students entered for any arts subject, compared to the national average.



Source: Department for Education, [Secondary school performance tables in England: 2019](#), (6 February 2020), National data.

<sup>10</sup> DfE, [GCSE and Equivalent Results \(2018/19\)](#), (updated February 2020), Table 2.

## Age Cohorts

University Technical Colleges were originally conceived to recruit students at age 14 and 16, providing technical education for 14-19 year olds. Since 2017, UTCs have been able to recruit from age 11. This followed the Government lobbying the Baker-Dearing Trust in October 2018 to adjust the entry age of UTCs.<sup>11</sup> In October 2019, Lord Baker told the House of Lords that any new UTCs “will go from 11 to 18”.<sup>12</sup>

In 2018, Warrington UTC allowed Year 9 students to join in the January before the 2018/19 academic year began in September, leading neighbouring schools to fear a loss of funding.<sup>13</sup> The Government confirmed that no schools would lose funding for those Year 9 pupils who made an early transfer to Warrington UTC.<sup>14</sup>

## Academies

UTCs operate as a type of academy. The [Academies Act 2010](#) makes provision for academies, as well as ‘additional schools’, such as free schools, UTCs and studio schools. Like other types of academy, UTCs operate in accordance with the terms of their funding agreement with the Secretary of State for Education.

As an academy, UTCs receive funding directly from the Government, and so do not have to follow the national curriculum, employ teachers with qualified teacher status (apart from in certain circumstances such as Special Educational Needs Coordinators), follow local authority term dates or standard school hours, or comply with the provisions of the School Teacher’s Pay and Conditions Document. Academies are inspected by Ofsted, and are judged using the same accountability system as other state-funded schools, though progress against Progress 8 and associated EBacc subjects are no longer seen by the Department for Education or Ofsted as useful measures for UTC performance.<sup>15</sup>

### 1.3 Opening a New UTC

As the chart overleaf shows, there were 48 open UTCs in the academic year 2018/19, a slight fall from a peak of 49 in 2017/18. A total of 58 UTCs have opened since 2010/11, of which 10 have closed (as of 1 October 2019). One new UTC, in Doncaster, is due to open in September 2020.<sup>16</sup>

In 2017, the Chief Executive of the Baker Dearing Trust stated that the Government had put the UTCs programme on “pause”.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>11</sup> HL Deb, [‘Education and Training’, 15 October 2018](#), c 284.

<sup>12</sup> HL Deb, [‘Vocational Education and Training, 28 October 2019](#), c 843.

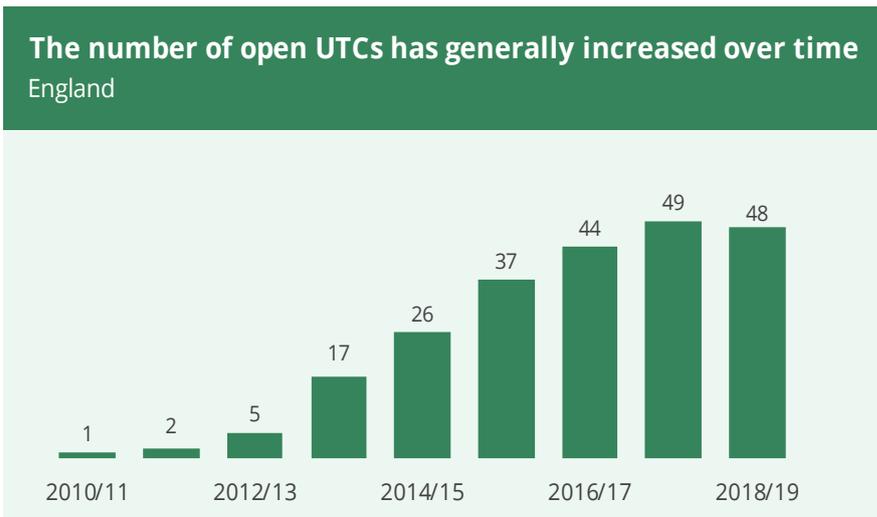
<sup>13</sup> [‘Warrington UTC Enrages Neighbouring Schools by ‘Poaching’ Pupils’, FE Week](#), 27 January 2018.

<sup>14</sup> [PO 122948, Schools: Warrington, 16 January 2018](#).

<sup>15</sup> Gov.UK, [‘Types of School: Academies’](#); DfE, [Governance Handbook](#) (March 2019), pp. 70, 100; DfE, [University Technical Colleges: How to Apply](#) (October 2015), pp. 7-8.

<sup>16</sup> Doncaster UTC, [‘Consultation’](#) (accessed 21 July 2020).

<sup>17</sup> [‘Is the UTCs programme on “Pause”?’](#), *Times Education Supplement*, 24 November 2017.



Source: NAO, [Investigation into UTCs](#) (2019), p.15.

In September 2019, the new Chief Executive of the Baker Dearing Trust, Simon Connell, stated that his priority for the next three years is to “consolidate”, increase recruitment and improve perceptions, rather than opening new UTCs at the rate of the previous decade.<sup>18</sup>

In November 2019, it was reported that new UTCs were proposed in Salford, Carlisle and Birmingham. The latter will be operated by the pre-existing WMG Academy Trust, and the two former by Energy Coast UTC. The DfE is expected to decide whether to approve their opening in Summer 2020.<sup>19</sup>

The DfE publishes [a list of UTC and studio school applications](#).

The DfE has published guidance for proposer groups on [opening a UTC](#), including a [pre-opening guide](#) for groups whose application has been successful. A [model funding agreement](#) is also available.

The process involved in establishing a UTC can be compared to that for opening a free school or studio school. The October 2015 [How to Apply Guidance](#) sets out the criteria that are used when an application is considered:

1.2 We have been looking at the experience of the UTC programme in its first five years of operation. In doing so, Ministers have agreed a number of changes including: increasing expectations about partnership arrangements, secondary expertise embedded in leadership and governance, and better targeting of future locations for UTCs to support stronger pupil recruitment. These changes are aimed at ensuring that we establish high quality, popular UTCs that meet the needs of the local, regional and national economy, and of parents and pupils, and are able to attract sufficient pupils. As a result, Ministers place great emphases on:

- the capacity and capability of the proposer group, particularly:

<sup>18</sup> [‘The Numbers Man Who’s Looking to Fill UTC Classrooms’](#), *FE Week*, 14 September 2019.

<sup>19</sup> [‘UTCs Back in the Market- But There’s a Catch’](#), *FE Week*, 30 November 2019.

- being part of a strong partnership including successful secondary schools (such as a multi-academy trust or MAT). Our experience to date with UTCs and academies shows that being part of a formal partnership involving schools and, if appropriate colleges, can bring a range of benefits (see pages 8-9);
  - relevant secondary education expertise – experience shows this is crucial to developing a rigorous, coherent, integrated and balanced curriculum offer and education plan to deliver your education vision and secure a good or better judgement at the first Ofsted inspection;
  - the track record and level of commitment of those in the proposer group who run existing education provision;
  - expertise in school finances; and
  - employer and university expertise in the chosen specialism(s) and that this is linked to local, regional and/or national skills gaps/needs.
- the quality of the provision when the UTC is open, including
    - a demanding, rigorous and aspirational education offer;
    - secondary expertise embedded in the leadership and governance;
    - specialist expertise among the teaching staff in the chosen specialism;
    - strong governance structures and governing body;
    - strong financial management;
    - the likelihood of being graded good or better by Ofsted at the first inspection; and
    - strong evidence of need for the UTC in your chosen location including potential demand from pupils of the relevant age group (depending on the particular age range you chose) and their parents, and robust plans for pupil recruitment.

1.3 We will only fund UTCs that are proposed by the strongest groups in areas where these new schools are needed most by employers, parents and pupils. This guidance includes a list of priority urban locations for this application round which do not currently have a UTC within reach. We would particularly welcome applications from these locations. UTCs must be able to attract sufficient pupils and provide value for money, especially in periods when capital funding is limited.<sup>20</sup>

On priority locations for UTCs, the DfE's [October 2015 Guidance](#) emphasises areas where existing schools are overcapacity or underperforming, and locations with good links to public transport, employers and universities:

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<sup>20</sup> DfE, [University Technical Colleges: How to Apply](#) (October 2015), pp. 4-5.

2.29 The technical education offered by UTCs, with the strong involvement of employers and universities, is vital to meeting the skills needs of the economy. We are therefore committed to opening strong and successful UTCs, and to have one within the reach of every city. Our experience suggests that UTCs will have a better chance of succeeding and attracting pupils if they are located in areas where:

- there is a large population of primary and secondary aged children and 16-19 pupils within the catchment area to ensure current and future viability;
- there is no other similar technical provision (including UTC provision) within reasonable travelling distance of the proposed site;
- public transport links are good; and
- existing secondary schools are at capacity and/or underperforming (underperforming schools are usually classed as schools rated as 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate' and/or have low pupil attainment and progression results).<sup>21</sup>

It is also necessary for new UTCs to sign a licence agreement with the Baker Dearing Educational Trust, agreeing the terms of use of the UTC brand and paying an annual subscription for access to the Trust's services and support.<sup>22</sup>

### 1.4 Closure/Conversion of UTCs

The NAO reported that, as of October 2019, 10 of the 58 UTCs that opened, have subsequently closed. Of these 10 closures, 6 were transferred to other academy trusts, 1 site returned to a local authority, 1 gifted to a university, and 2 were awaiting a decision.<sup>23</sup> [South Wiltshire UTC](#) is also due to close in August 2020.<sup>24</sup>

In the event that a UTC closes, the Government states that it works with the local authority and academy trust to ensure that new school places are identified that meet the needs of each individual child.<sup>25</sup> This has included the sponsors of UTCs offering a place for pupils to continue their course, converting the UTC to a mainstream academy, or waiting for all students to finish their course and not recruiting for earlier year groups before closing.<sup>26</sup> The Permanent Secretary of the DfE told the Public Accounts Committee in March 2020 that the Department will also consider "putting them [UTCs] into MATs to share the costs, and increasingly turning them into 11 to 19".<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> [Ibid](#), pp. 16-17.

<sup>22</sup> [Ibid](#), p. 5.

<sup>23</sup> NAO, [Investigation into UTCs](#), p. 5.

<sup>24</sup> 'Get Information About Schools' lists additional UTCs as closed. However, [Derby Manufacturing UTC](#) is now known as [UTC Derby Pride Park](#); [UTC Heathrow](#) remains open; Medway UTC changed its name to [Waterfront UTC](#); Sir Charles KAO UTC was renamed [BMAT STEM Academy](#), and is supported by the Baker Trust as a UTC; UTC@MediaCityUK was renamed [AldridgeUTC@MediaCityUK](#)

<sup>25</sup> [PO 292904, Wigan University Technical College, 1 October 2019](#)

<sup>26</sup> NAO, [Investigation into UTCs](#), p. 23.

<sup>27</sup> Public Accounts Committee, [University Technical Colleges: Oral Evidence](#), 17 March 2020, Q16

## List of Closed/Converted UTCs

### 1. **Black Country UTC, 2011-2015**

The UTC closed after Ofsted twice found the school required improvement and that it was 33% full.<sup>28</sup> The site was returned to Walsall Council in 2017.<sup>29</sup>

### 2. **Hackney UTC, 2012-2015**

The Government stated this closed after receiving 29 applications out of target of 75 for September 2015.<sup>30</sup> In 2017, the site was being temporarily used for the Olive School, Hackney.<sup>31</sup>

### 3. **Central Bedfordshire UTC, 2012-2016**

This closed due to attracting insufficient student numbers, operating at 16.8% of capacity in the final year.<sup>32</sup> The site was initially used by Bedford College to allow UTC students to complete their studies, and by the Academy of Central Bedfordshire.<sup>33</sup>

### 4. **UTC Greenwich, 2013-2017**

The UTC was converted into a Trust School, due to issues in recruitment for the UTC.<sup>34</sup>

### 5. **UTC Lancashire, 2013-2017**

The UTC was running at less than 20% capacity in its year previous to closing.<sup>35</sup> Burnley Council intends the site to be used with the University of Central Lancashire.<sup>36</sup>

### 6. **Daventry UTC, 2013-2017**

Daventry UTC closed, following 151 students being enrolled in 2015/16 out a capacity of 600.<sup>37</sup> The building became part of an academy.<sup>38</sup>

### 7. **Greater Manchester UTC, 2014-2017**

Greater Manchester UTC closed owing to low pupil numbers.<sup>39</sup> The site was later used by Oasis Academy Oldham to educate Year 7 pupils who lacked a school place.<sup>40</sup>

### 8. **UTC Tottenham, 2014-2017**

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<sup>28</sup> ['Black Country UTC to Shut as Student Numbers Fail to Increase and Ofsted sees lack of improvement'](#), *Schools Week*, 14 April 2015.

<sup>29</sup> [PO 67037, Free Schools and University Technical Colleges: Closures, 27 March 2017.](#)

<sup>30</sup> ['Seven New University Technical Colleges Announced by Government'](#), *Times Education Supplement*, 5 August 2014.

<sup>31</sup> [PO 67037, Free Schools and University Technical Colleges: Closures, 27 March 2017.](#)

<sup>32</sup> ['Struggling Central Bedfordshire to Close despite FE college's Intervention'](#), *FE Week*, 10 March 2016.

<sup>33</sup> [PO 67037, Free Schools and University Technical Colleges: Closures, 27 March 2017.](#)

<sup>34</sup> ['UTC Will Switch to Become Secondary School at Cost of £13m'](#), *Schools Week*, 10 October 2016.

<sup>35</sup> ['UTC Lancashire to Shut up Shop After Just Three Years'](#), *FE Week*, 6 May 2016.

<sup>36</sup> ['Former UTC Building to Brought into Use'](#), *Burnley Express*, 25 July 2018.

<sup>37</sup> ['Daventry UTC Announces It Is to Close Next Year'](#), *FE Week*, 7 December 2016.

<sup>38</sup> ['Agreement Reached over Age Restrictions at Former UTC Site'](#), *Schools Week*, 23 October 2017.

<sup>39</sup> ['£9m Greater Manchester college closes after three years'](#), *The Guardian*, 7 October 2017

<sup>40</sup> ['Ex-College Site for Year 7 Pupils'](#), *Oldham Evening Chronicle*, 12 July 2017

The UTC closed due to low registration numbers, and the site was used by the London Academy of Excellence after the UTC's closure.<sup>41</sup>

### 9. **UTC@Harbourside [Newhaven], 2015-2019**

The UTC stated that it had not been able to recruit enough students to become financially stable.<sup>42</sup> In February 2019, the DfE announced that Lewes and Eastbourne Councils and the East Sussex College Group were the "preferred partners" for the site.<sup>43</sup>

### 10. **Wigan UTC, 2013-2019**

Wigan UTC closed after recruiting 108 of the intended 500 students.<sup>44</sup>

### 11. **South Wiltshire UTC, 2015-2020**

Low demand for places affected the financial viability of the UTC.<sup>45</sup> The Government has agreed in principle to close the UTC in August 2020.

## UTC projects cancelled prior to opening

Four proposed UTCs have been cancelled at stages prior to opening:

### 1. **Birkenhead UTC, 2013**

Cancelled during pre-opening stage.<sup>46</sup>

### 2. **UTC Liverpool: Engineering and Logistics, 2014**

Cancelled during pre-opening stage.<sup>47</sup>

### 3. **Burton and South Derbyshire UTC, 2016**

Withdrawn following low pupil recruitment numbers.<sup>48</sup> The site was instead used by an academy trust.<sup>49</sup>

### 4. **Guilford UTC, 2017**

Guilford UTC was cancelled in 2017 after the Government withdrew its support.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> ['Failing Spurs-Sponsored School Costs Taxpayer £500,000 rent a year'](#), *The Guardian*, 10 January 2017.

<sup>42</sup> ['UTC@Harbourside is the Ninth UTC to Close'](#), *Schools Week*, July 2018.

<sup>43</sup> ['Delight as Rescue Package Revealed for Troubled Newhaven College'](#), *Sussex Express*, 26 February 2019.

<sup>44</sup> ['Tenth UTC Closure Announced'](#), *Schools Week*, 4 April 2019.

<sup>45</sup> UTC Salisbury, ['Salisbury UTC to Close'](#), 16 July 2019.

<sup>46</sup> ['Government Spent £15m on UTCS that closed or Did Not Open'](#), *TES*, 18 September 2015.

<sup>47</sup> DfE, ['University Technical College Expenditure'](#), 31 January 2019.

<sup>48</sup> ['UTC Will Not Open Despite DfE Spending Over £8m'](#), *FE Week*, 7 September 2016.

<sup>49</sup> ['Sixth Formers to Move to Site of UTC that never Opened'](#), *Schools Week*, 13 December 2017.

<sup>50</sup> ['Guilford UTC becomes latest UTC project to be abandoned'](#), *TES*, 13 March 2017.

## 2. Expenditure and Financial Position of UTCs

### Government Expenditure

From the financial year 2010/11 to 2018/19, the DfE spent £792 million on the UTC programme, in addition to the per pupil funding that UTCs and other schools receive. 86% (£680 million) of this additional expenditure was on capital grants for land, building and equipment.<sup>51</sup>

This funding also included £38 million in revenue grants to cover the cost of UTCs as they built towards capacity, at which point running costs were expected to be met by core per-pupil funding.<sup>52</sup>

Transitional funding has been used to reduce UTCs' debts since 2016/17. The DfE attaches conditions to this, such as the UTC joining a multi-academy trust or working with external advisers to review its financial position. From the financial year 2016/17 to 2018/19, £11.7 million of the £28 million transition funding has been spent on reducing UTC debts.<sup>53</sup>

The Permanent Secretary of the DfE told the Public Accounts Committee in March 2020 that transition funding for each UTC is to be reduced from £200,000 a year to £100,000 in 2020/21, the final year of such funding.<sup>54</sup>

The DfE published data for individual and proposed UTCs on:

- [Capital funding for UTCs](#), to buy and rent land and build and refurbish school buildings.
- [Revenue spending on UTCs](#), on project development grants and post-developments that cannot be met through usual funding.

The Baker Dearing Trust told the Public Accounts Committee in March 2020 that its own analysis showed that an "UTC education costs more to deliver" and recommended sharing the analysis with the DfE so it could conduct an analysis of its cost.<sup>55</sup>

### Baker Dearing Educational Trust Income

The Baker-Dearing Trust, which promotes and supports new and existing UTCs, receives a grant from the DfE to provide advice and guidance to proposer groups developing applications to establish UTCs.

<sup>51</sup> National Audit Office (NAO), [Investigation into University Technical Colleges](#) (2019), p.7.

<sup>52</sup> [Ibid](#), p. 14.

<sup>53</sup> [Ibid](#), pp. 21, 22.

<sup>54</sup> Public Accounts Committee, [Oral evidence: UTCs](#), HC 87, 16 March 2020 Q44

<sup>55</sup> [Written evidence submitted by Baker Dearing Educational Trust to the Public Accounts Committee](#), 18 March 2020, p3

The DfE paid £893,000 to the Baker-Dearing Trust between the financial year 2010/11 and 2018/19 to support sponsors planning to open new UTCs.<sup>56</sup>

UTCs also pay an annual licence fee to the Baker Dearing Educational Trust, which owns the UTC brand. In 2019/20, this annual fee was raised to £10,000, having previously been £5,500. The Trust's Chief Executive said that the services that the licence fee covers have cost around £20,000 per college for the previous years. In the year ending December 2018, 14% of the Baker-Dearing Trust income came from UTC licence fees, at £272,079.<sup>57</sup> In the year ending December 2019, the Trust received £358,235 in fees, around 47% of its total income of £748,612 for the year.<sup>58</sup>

### Financial Position of UTCs

Because most UTCs are under-subscribed (see section below), a significant proportion of UTC academy trusts have reported in-year and cumulative revenue deficits each year, the latter growing between the financial year 2014/15 and 2016/17, but falling in 2017/18 when four UTCs closed.<sup>59</sup>

In 2017/18, 14 of the 32 UTC academy trusts reported a cumulative revenue deficit of £7.7 million.<sup>60</sup>

The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) judges financial risk in schools. As of July 2019, the EFSA had significant concerns about 13 UTCs, 12 due their financial position and 1 due to compliance issues. This was an improvement from the previous year, when the EFSA had concerns regarding 15 UTCs.<sup>61</sup>

The EFSA has issued financial notices to 8 UTCs: in October 2019, 4 of these remained in place, 2 had been lifted, and 2 UTCs that had been issued financial notices closed.<sup>62</sup>

As of March 2020, School Resource Management Advisors (SRMAs) had identified £10 million of savings in 33 UTCs, £4.3 million of which had been achieved.<sup>63</sup> SRMAs are school business professionals and headteachers who provide advice to individual trusts and schools as part of a DfE programme on effective resource management.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> NAO, [Investigation into UTCs](#), p. 8.

<sup>57</sup> ['Licence fees to almost Double for Cash-Strapped UTCs'](#), *FE Week*, 16 August 2018; [Baker-Dearing Educational Trust: Report and Financial Statements for Year Ended 31 December 2018](#) (2018), p. 17.

<sup>58</sup> Baker-Dearing Educational Trust, [Reports and financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2019](#) (2019), pp12, 17; Charity Commission, [Baker Dearing Educational Trust](#), accessed 22 July 2020

<sup>59</sup> NAO, [Investigation into UTCs](#), p.16.

<sup>60</sup> NAO, [Investigation into UTCs](#), p.16.

<sup>61</sup> [Ibid](#), p. 20.

<sup>62</sup> [Ibid](#), p. 21.

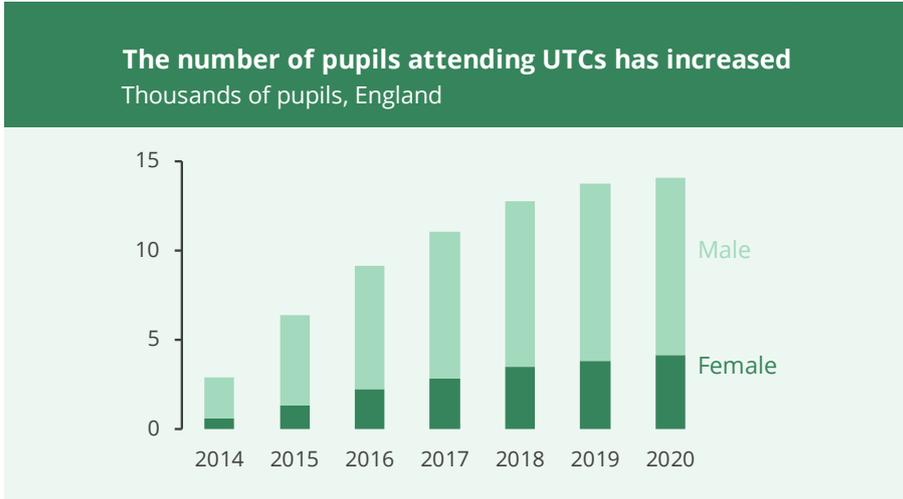
<sup>63</sup> Public Accounts Committee, [University Technical Colleges: Oral Evidence](#), 17 March 2020, Q34

<sup>64</sup> Education and Skills Funding Agency, [School resource management adviser: Pilot evaluation](#), January 2020, p. 5.

## Student Numbers

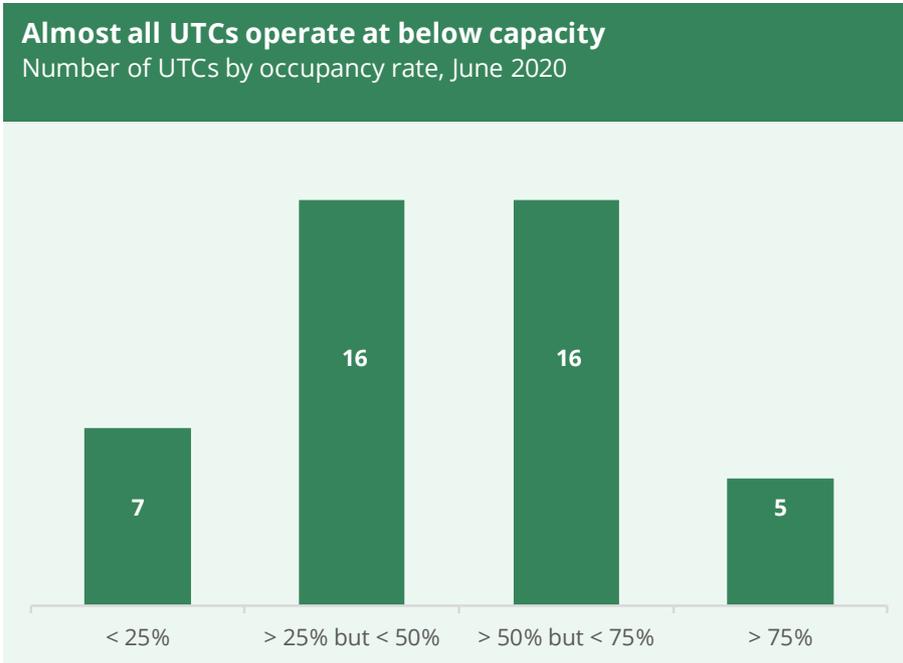
As at January 2020, there were 48 open UTCs with 14,067 students on roll.<sup>65</sup> Student numbers were slightly higher than the previous year, where 13,752 students attended UTCs.<sup>66</sup>

The chart below shows that the rate of growth in UTC pupil numbers has slowed since 2016.



Note: Student figures rounded to the nearest ten before 2018. The school census is taken in January each year.

Source: DfE, [‘Schools Pupils and Their Characteristics- Underlying Data’](#), 2014-2020



Note: Data available for 44 of 48 open UTCs

Source: Gov.uk, [‘Get Information About Schools’](#).

As at 2 July 2020, UTC occupancy rates averaged 46%, ranging from 12% in Plymouth UTC to 101% in Ashton University Engineering

<sup>65</sup> DfE, [Schools, pupils and their characteristics](#) (25 June 2020): underlying data.

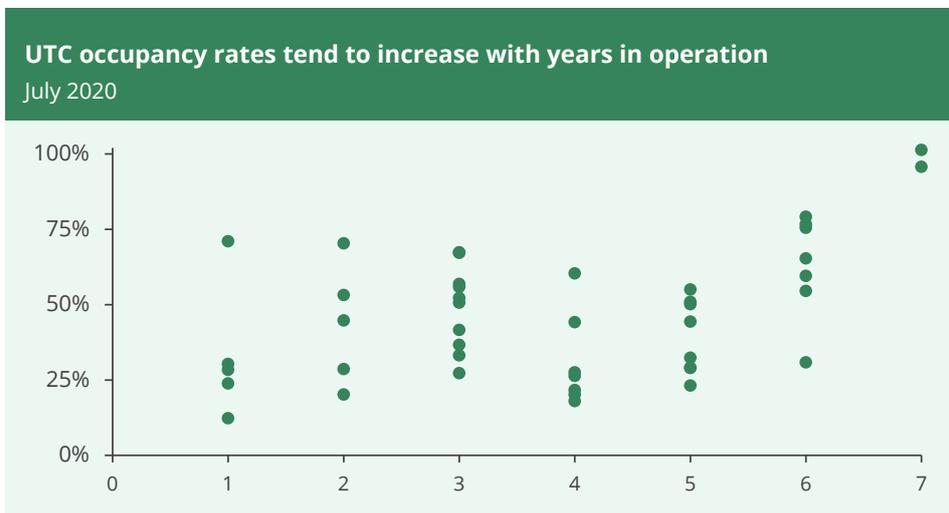
<sup>66</sup> DfE [Schools, pupils and their characteristics](#) (27 June 2019): main tables, Table 2b.

Academy.<sup>67</sup> UTCs had an average capacity of 632 pupils at 2 July 2020, and an average of 370 pupils on roll. The two-longest opened UTCs, were 96% and 101% occupied respectively as at 2 July 2020.<sup>68</sup>

Occupancy rates at the 10 UTCs that have closed (as of October 2019) ranged between 23% and 26% in the two years before closure.<sup>69</sup>

A [Fol by FE Week](#) had shown that learner numbers dropped in 2016/17, compared to 2015/16, in two-thirds of 20 UTCs that opened between 2010 and 2014.<sup>70</sup>

The chart below shows that the length of time that a UTC has been open does appear to have some impact on occupancy rates. UTCs tend to recruit students in years 10 and 12, so UTCs take time to build up student numbers. The range in occupancy rates between UTCs that have been opened for the same length of time suggest that some have struggled to attract students to the same degree as other UTCs.



Source: Gov.uk, [‘Get Information About Schools’](#), as at 2 July 2020

<sup>67</sup> 3 of the 48 open UTCs did not report capacity data. Gov.uk, [‘Get Information About Schools’](#). This database can be amended by schools/ UTCs themselves.

<sup>68</sup> Gov.uk, [‘Get Information About Schools’](#).

<sup>69</sup> NAO, [Investigation into UTCs](#), p.16.

<sup>70</sup> [‘Crisis Deepens As Learners Drop At Two Thirds Of UTCs’](#), *FE Week*, 28 April 2017.

## 3. Pupil Profile

UTCs are intended to have a broadly comprehensive intake. This means that they should recruit a mix of girls and boys at 14 from a broad mix of prior attainment levels and backgrounds.

The Institute for Policy Research (IPPR) [analysed](#) information from the DfE's [National Pupil Database](#). For the year 2015, it found that UTC intake at aged 14 was:

More likely to be boys with high attainment in maths and low attainment in English (p.4)

Joined from a school that had an adverse Ofsted rating ('requires improvement' or 'inadequate'). (p.4)

Drawn equally from both affluent and deprived neighbourhoods (p.13)

Found to have levels of prior attainment in maths at ages 7 and 11 that are identical to the national average (p.14)

Pupils at UTCs are most likely to be predicted to achieve the middle grades (B–D) at GCSE (p.15)

### 3.1 Free School Meals

As at January 2020, 17% of UTC pupils were eligible for Free School Meals (FSM), which is the same as the national average across state-funded primary, secondary, alternative provision and non-maintained special schools. The proportion of pupils eligible for FSM at the UTC level ranged widely from 5% (Portsmouth UTC) to 45% (Simon Milton UTC).<sup>71</sup>

### 3.2 Special Educational Needs

In January 2020, 14.4% of UTC pupils had Special Educational Needs (SEN) support, and 1.8% had an EHC plan. This was slightly below the national average of 12.1% of pupils in receipt of SEN Support, and 3.3% of pupils with an EHC plan.<sup>72</sup>

### 3.3 Gender

The chart overleaf shows that girls have consistently formed a minority of students at UTCs. In January 2014, 21% of students were female, compared to the national average of 50%. This has increased over time, reaching a peak of 29% in 2020.<sup>73</sup>

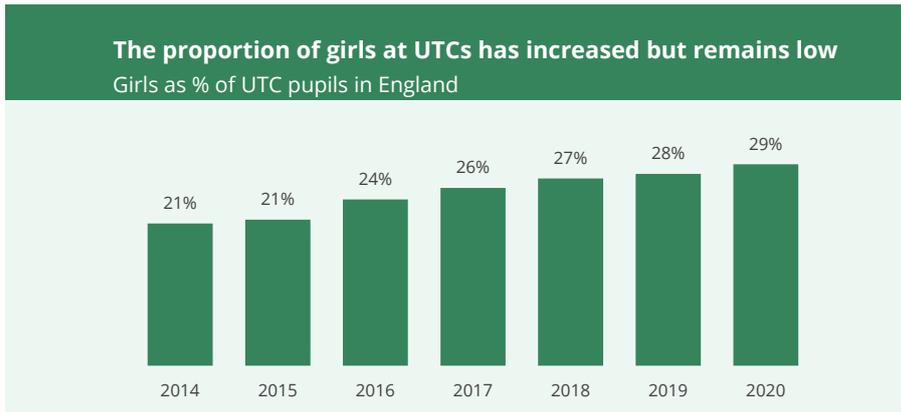
In October 2019, Lord Baker argued that recruiting at 11 had meant the UTC in Dartford had "many more girls than boys at that stage".<sup>74</sup>

<sup>71</sup> DfE, [Schools, pupils and their characteristics: January 2020](#), (25 June 2020) underlying data.

<sup>72</sup> DfE, [Special Educational Needs in England: January 2020](#), (2 July 2020).

<sup>73</sup> DfE, [Schools Pupils and Their Characteristics 2014-2020](#)

<sup>74</sup> HL Deb, [Vocational Education and Training, 28 October 2019](#), c 843.



Note: Student figures rounded to the nearest ten before 2018. Census taken in January each year.

Source: DfE, [‘Schools Pupils and Their Characteristics- Underlying Data’](#), 2014-2020.

In May 2014, the Baker Dearing Educational Trust published survey results of 735 girls at UTCs and mainstream schools. The survey found that 43% of girls at mainstream schools thought they had the same opportunities as boys, compared to 65% at UTCs. The survey found 3% of girls in mainstream schools would consider a career in engineering, compared to 65% of girls in UTCs.<sup>75</sup>

In November 2019, 50% of teachers in UTCs were female. Across all state-funded secondary schools, 63% of teachers were female.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>75</sup> [‘Apprenticeship Rules Cost UK £1.5bn and Female Pupils Reject Stem Careers’](#), *The Guardian*, 17 May 2014.

<sup>76</sup> DfE, [‘School Workforce in England: November 2019’](#) (25 June 2020), underlying data.

## 4. UTCs: Performance and Ofsted Reports

It is important to note that in assessing GCSE results of UTC pupils, most would historically have spent the majority of their secondary years in schools that were not UTCs.

In August 2018, the DfE [announced](#), following discussions with the Association of Colleges and the Baker Dearing Trust, that UTCs and other institutions that focus on professional education and have an atypical age range, will be assessed by measuring pupil destinations, in addition to Progress 8 measures. UTCs, most of which offer education for 14-18 year olds, do not cover the full five years measured by Progress 8.<sup>77</sup> The additional guidance now reads:

Progress 8 is not the most appropriate performance measure for university technical colleges, studio schools and some further education colleges. These establishments typically start educating pupils at age 14, with a focus on preparing pupils for their future careers by providing an integrated academic and professional education. Other headline measures, particularly pupil destinations, are more important for these establishments.<sup>78</sup>

### 4.1 Pupil Attendance

In the 2019 Autumn term, out of the 50 state-funded secondary schools with the highest overall absences, 9 were UTCs. One UTC featured among the 50 secondary schools with the lowest overall absence rate.

#### Interpreting overall absences

The DfE defines overall absences as the number of days missed as a proportion of the total number of days it was possible for pupils to attend.

In the autumn term, the absence rate across all UTCs for which there was data, was 7.5%. This exceeds the national secondary school average of 5.6%. Overall absences at the UTC level (where data was available) ranged widely, from 2.7% to 20.2%.<sup>79</sup>

The 2017 report by the [National Foundation for Education Research](#) found “a significant gap in absence rates between UTC students and the comparison group [of other schools]” during key stage 3 and 4, suggesting that “UTC students may have faced some challenges in terms of engagement in school”.<sup>80</sup> At post-16 level, UTCs had the lowest retention rate of pupils in 2016 and the second lowest retention rate in 2018 (76%).<sup>81</sup>

<sup>77</sup> Progress 8 measures student’s progress between key stage 2 and key stage 4. It is a points score calculated from a pupil’s best 8 grades across 3 subject-based categories. For more information, see the Library Briefing Paper, [Changes to School Accountability and ‘League Tables’ in England in 2016](#) (2016), p. 14.

<sup>78</sup> [DfE to Office for Statistics Regulator](#), 13 August 2018, pp. 1-2.

<sup>79</sup> Department for Education, [Pupil absence in schools in England: autumn term: 2019/20](#) (28 May 2020), underlying data.

<sup>80</sup> National Foundation for Education Research (NFER), [University Technical Colleges: Beneath the Headlines](#) (2017), p. 10.

<sup>81</sup> DfE, [Academy Schools Sector in England: Consolidate Annual Report and Accounts for the Year Ended 31 August 2018](#) (22 July 2019), p. 32.

## 4.2 GCSE results

In 2018/19, 52% of UTC students achieved a Grade 4 or above (broadly comparable to A\*-C grades) in English and Maths GCSEs, compared to 66% nationally in state funded mainstream schools.<sup>82</sup>

## 4.3 Pupil Outcomes: Destinations

The Baker-Dearing Foundation Trust argues that the success of UTCs should be measured by employment outcomes, and that UTC students leave education in a more appealing position to employers compared to other school leavers.

The CBI/ Pearson report [Educating for the Modern World](#) (2018) stated on business demands of school leavers and graduates:

The evidence for this is clear in the survey findings, over half of employers (60%) value broader skills, such as listening and problem-solving, as one of their three most important considerations when recruiting school and college leavers. Furthermore, almost half (45%) of businesses rank readiness for work as the single most important factor. Even when considering the value of qualifications, nearly three quarters (74%) of the businesses say they prefer a mixture of academic and technical qualifications, or that they view all qualifications equally.<sup>83</sup>

In February 2019, Lord Baker [criticised](#) the Department of Education's data on school-leavers' destinations in an article in *FE Week* as incomplete and published in a delayed fashion, particularly significant for UTCs as the oldest was only established in 2011. Lord Baker stated that the Baker-Dearing's UTC Hub captured 98% of all UTC leavers in 2018, which captures destination "starts" rather than the DfE's "sustained destinations" over 6 months. In 2018, UTC Hub found that 27% of 18-year-old UTC leavers started an apprenticeship and 47% started at university, with 80% choosing a STEM course at university.<sup>84</sup> In evidence submitted to the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee in 2020, the Trust said in 2019 that 22% of 18-year old UTC leavers had begun an apprenticeship.<sup>85</sup>

For those completing key stage 4 (the GCSE phase) in summer 2017, 9% of UTC students entered a sustained apprenticeship (4% national secondary average) and 5% employment (3% national secondary average), with around 92% in sustained education or work (94% national average).<sup>86</sup> "Sustained" means that the student was recorded in sustained participation for at least 6 months in the year after leaving education.

<sup>82</sup> Department for Education, [Key stage 4 performance 2019 \(revised\)](#), (6 February 2020), national tables.

<sup>83</sup> CBI/Pearson, [Educating for the Modern World](#) (November 2018), p. 9.

<sup>84</sup> Lord Baker, '[The Official UTC Figures Don't Show the Full Picture](#)', *FE Week*, 3 February 2019.

<sup>85</sup> Public Accounts Committee, [University Technical Colleges](#), HC 87, 10 June 2020, para 16

<sup>86</sup> DfE, [Destinations of Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 Students, England, 2017/18](#) (17 October 2019): Key stage 4 national tables, table NA2.

For those completing the A Level/ equivalent phase in summer 2017, 21% of UTC students moved to a sustained apprenticeship, higher than the national mainstream school average of 7%.<sup>87</sup> 35% of UTC students went into higher education, compared to 54% nationally.<sup>88</sup>

## 4.4 Ofsted Reports

At their most recent full Ofsted inspection:

- 5% (2 UTCs) were judged 'outstanding' – compared to 21% of state-funded secondary phase schools, overall.
- 48% (20 UTCs) were 'good' (56% across all secondaries)
- 36%, (15 UTCs) requires improvement (16% across all secondaries)
- 12%, (5 UTCs) inadequate (7% across all secondaries).<sup>89</sup>

Inspections of UTC apprenticeship provision were introduced in 2018 and are separate from the general inspection of UTCs by Ofsted. In 2019, London Design and Engineering UTC was found to be making "insufficient progress" in its apprenticeship program and it was reported that it was expected to have its apprenticeship recruitment suspended by Ofsted.<sup>90</sup>

In November 2019, the DfE said it was encouraging UTCs to join multi-academy trusts as the "best way to ensure they improve educationally".<sup>91</sup>

## New Ofsted Inspection Framework

A revised [Ofsted Inspection Framework](#) was introduced in 2019. Inspectors will now take account of measures such as students' destinations when they leave UTCs, in addition to national performance data. On measuring Progress 8 in UTCs, the new guidance states:

The progress 8 accountability measure is not the most appropriate performance indicator for UTCs and studio schools. These establishments typically start educating pupils at age 14 and have a focus on preparing pupils for their future careers. Inspectors will pay attention to other measures, particularly pupils' destinations when they leave the UTC or studio school.<sup>92</sup>

In response to the consultation on the new framework, the Baker Dearing Trust supported its "holistic approach to considering quality of education, and in particular the coherence of curriculum intent, implementation and impact" and the "disapplication of the EBacc requirements and the recognition of the unsuitability of the Progress 8 measure for 14-19 UCTs".<sup>93</sup>

<sup>87</sup> NAO, [Investigation into UTCs](#), p. 8.

<sup>88</sup> DfE, [Destinations of KS4 and 16 to 18 \(KS5\) students: 2018](#) (October 2019); key stage 4 national tables, table NA2; 16 to 18 national tables, table NA2.

<sup>89</sup> Ofsted, [State-funded schools inspections and outcomes as at 31 March 2020](#), (30 June 2020). Excludes providers that have not undergone a full inspection.

<sup>90</sup> ['UTC Faces Apprentice Recruitment Freeze After Ofsted Criticism'](#), *Schools Week*, 17 October 2019.

<sup>91</sup> [PO 7633, University Technical Colleges: Standards, 4 November 2019](#).

<sup>92</sup> Ofsted, [School Inspection Handbook](#) (November 2019), paragraph 311.

<sup>93</sup> Baker Dearing Trust, ['Response...to Current Consultation on the Draft Inspection Framework'](#), March 2019, p. 1.

## 5. Commentary on UTCs

### Sir Michael Wilshaw, 2016

In July 2016, then-HM Chief Inspector of Schools Sir Michael Wilshaw gave a [speech at the Baker Dearing UTC conference](#), where he set out his belief that UTCs “have a pivotal role to play in raising both the status and the quality of technical education in this country.”

However, Sir Michael described current UTC performance as “patchy” and that their performance needed to be “significantly better” to be politically sustainable.

Sir Michael stated that Ofsted inspectors had found some common weaknesses in weaker UTCs:

- an often indistinctive and poorly thought-through curriculum
- low expectations of what pupils can achieve
- weak and inconsistent teaching, including of literacy and numeracy skills
- under-developed careers guidance and a failure to make best use of links with local employers.

Sir Michael also set out some common characteristics of UTCs that had been found to be good or outstanding:

- business-like ethos and culture of high aspirations and expectations for both staff and students
- carefully designed and specialised curriculum, with a strong focus on equipping students with the technical knowledge to meet local skills shortages
- robust tracking and assessment systems
- impressive destination data showing students have achieved the relevant qualifications to enable them to progress to the next stage of their education or into a job
- excellent links forged with local and national employers that offer students real world experience through well-planned work placements
- exemplary careers guidance;
- well-equipped laboratories and workshops
- strong literacy and numeracy development that underpins good progress in the technical aspects of the curriculum;  
strong feedback from business partners on the progress of students.<sup>94</sup>

### Michael Gove, 2017

In February 2017, the former Education Secretary Michael Gove [published](#) an article in the *Times*, which argued that the time had come

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<sup>94</sup> Ofsted, [Sir Michael Wilshaw's speech at the Baker Dearing UTC conference](#), 21 July 2016.

to accept that UTCs had not worked as an experiment, despite some successes. He attributed the weaknesses of the policy to several factors:

The first is the principle that admission should be at the age of 14. The originator of the UTC idea, Kenneth Baker, has argued that all students should be divided at 14 and given the option of either a technical, or artistic and creative, or academic education. He saw UTCs as the vanguard of this revolution. But other schools have seen them as destinations for underperforming children. Students whose poor academic prospects might hamper league table performance have been directed towards UTCs and higher-performing contemporaries have been warned off. On top of that, many parents and students themselves have felt that 14 is too young to opt for a narrowly specialist path.<sup>95</sup>

Lord Baker [responded](#) in the *Telegraph* in support of UTCs, and addressed in particular the recruitment issue:

Justine Greening has decided to help UTCs recruit at age 14 – something that has always been difficult for us – by changing the law to require all local authorities to write to parents of 13-year-old children about UTCs that might be attractive to their children. She is also going to change the law to allow principals of UTCs to visit local schools and tell students about some of the opportunities available at their colleges. This is a big step forward in improving careers advice.

UTCs take in some youngsters who are totally disengaged – some with personal difficulties, who have largely written off their education.<sup>96</sup>

## George Osborne, 2018

Appearing before the Education Committee in 2018, George Osborne said that UTCs should allow pupils to start earlier than aged 14:

**George Osborne:** To be honest, the history of the UTC was it started right at the end of the Blair/Brown Government, and there was a trust called the Baker Dearing Educational Trust that oversaw it. Ken Baker is passionate about it, and we expanded it under the Conservative coalition Administration that I was part of. There was a question mark about starting it at 14. There is an argument, which I was digging into before I left office, which is moving school at 14 is not always the easiest thing for people to do and they are reluctant to do it. So in terms of whether the Government should allow more flexibility in the UTC model, and perhaps have kids starting earlier, I do not doubt it has worked very well in some cases, but it clearly has not worked in others. If I was back at the Treasury, I would be looking at that.<sup>97</sup>

Lord Baker, in an interview with *Schools Week*, responded that recruitment was increasing and the implementation of the “Baker Clause” (see below) would tackle the recruitment gap further. He also

<sup>95</sup> Michael Gove, [‘Dividing Our Children at 14 Has Not Worked’](#), *The Times*, 10 February 2017.

<sup>96</sup> Lord Baker, [‘Michael Gove is Talking Rubbish About My Technical Colleges – They Are Working Brilliantly’](#), *Telegraph*, 17 February 2017.

<sup>97</sup> Education Select Committee, [Oral Evidence: Education in the North](#), HC 819, 2 May 2018, Q11).

stated the Trust would be content to change the starting age from 14 to 13.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> [‘Special Interview: Lord Baker Defends UTCs as Problems Pile Up’](#), *Schools Week*, 11 May 2018.

## 6. Policy Developments post-2015

### 6.1 2015 Pause in UTC Programme

On 9 June 2015, the local MP for the Black Country UTC, David Winnick, raised the college's closure in an [adjournment debate](#). The skills Minister, Nick Boles, said that he was considering how best to take forward the UTC programme ahead of further expansion:

We want to ensure that the university technical college programme, to which the Government are firmly committed and which has great support from the main Opposition party, flourishes and creates institutions that are educationally and financially successful, so that they can recruit sufficient numbers of young people and give them a great education. [...] I am looking at all the questions about how a UTC works; who it recruits and when it recruits them; what specialisms are involved; what its partnership and sponsorship arrangements are; and how it involves universities and employers, and which ones are getting involved. I am determined to ensure that the programme ends up producing fantastic institutions that offer great opportunities for young people to receive a technical education.

[...]

On the hon. Gentleman's suggestion of a pause, there is a natural pause in a sense, because there are certain times at which we solicit bids for new university technical colleges. We are currently considering what the appropriate time will be to open up a bidding round, and I can assure him that there will be a number of months before that when we can consider all the lessons from this and other experiences.<sup>99</sup>

The DfE subsequently reopened UTC applications in October 2015, with the publication of [new guidelines on applying to open new UTCs](#).

### 6.2 Requirement to inform parents

The [School Information \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2017](#) required local authorities to write to parents of pupils due to move into year 10 to make them aware of schools with 'atypical points of admission' within reasonable travel distance from February 2017.<sup>100</sup> Councils received funding of 40p per pupil for 2017/2018 in order to do this.<sup>101</sup>

The Baker Trust reported in 2017 that applications for Year 10 ran at nearly double the rate compared with 2016, citing evidence from three UTCs.<sup>102</sup>

### 6.3 'Baker Clause'

The "Baker Clause" was introduced as an amendment to the [Technical and Further Education Act 2017](#) by Lord Baker, and requires every state

<sup>99</sup> [HC Deb, 'Black Country UTC', 9 June 2015, c1167](#)

<sup>100</sup> ['Councils paid £100k to Write to Parents About UTCs'](#), *Schools Week*, 23 February 2017.

<sup>101</sup> DfE, ['Atypical Age Admissions Letters: Funding for Local Authorities'](#), 18 August 2017.

<sup>102</sup> ['UTC Applications Surge After Letters Sent to Parents'](#), *Schools Week*, 2 June 2017.

school from January 2018 to give training providers and colleges access to pupils aged 8 to 13 to discuss technical education and apprenticeships. The clause sought to overcome the disincentives for encouraging students to change schools at Year 10, given that schools are largely funded on a per-pupil basis. The amendment was accepted by the Government, and built upon a Business, Innovation and Skills and Education Committees 2016 Report on [Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance](#) (HC 205, 2016-17).

Under the clause, schools are required to publish a “provider access statement” of how they give access to alternative training providers.<sup>103</sup> Inspectors are required to establish how effectively this is being delivered in schools.

[Schools Week](#) looked at the central 10 websites of the 10 largest academy trusts and 10% of their schools, to see if policy statements had been published by January 2018, finding that only 2 of the 10 Academy Trusts had complied with the new law.<sup>104</sup> The IPPR Report [‘The Baker Clause One Year On’](#) (2019) found that only 37.6% of the 101 surveyed schools had published a provider access statement by January 2019. The research also found that 70% of 68 surveyed UTCs and FE colleges said it was difficult to access schools in their area.<sup>105</sup>

Lord Baker called upon Ofsted inspectors to “condemn” schools that were not compliant with the law.<sup>106</sup> In the wake of slow-implementation of the clause in 2018, the then-Skills and Apprenticeships Minister Anne Milton had warned of “direct intervention” by the DfE.<sup>107</sup> A [Schools Week Fol](#) found that no action had been taken against schools between 2 January 2018 and 2 January 2019, but letters had been sent to 5 of the largest Academy Trusts to remind schools of the clause.<sup>108</sup>

The House of Commons Education Committee 2018 Report [The Apprenticeships Ladder of Opportunity: Quality not Quantity](#) (HC 344, 2017-19) called upon the Government to enforce the clause:

Too many students are still not receiving independent and impartial careers advice and guidance about the routes open to them, including apprenticeships. We recommend that the Government, with Ofsted’s support, properly enforces the Baker clause. In its response to this report it should set out how it plans to do this, and what penalties will be imposed on schools that flout their obligations.<sup>109</sup>

<sup>103</sup> [Technical and Further Education Act 2017](#), Pt 1, ch 2.

<sup>104</sup> [‘Baker Clause: MATs Failing to Meet New Rules’](#), *Schools Week*, 26 January 2018,

<sup>105</sup> IPPR Report [‘The Baker Clause One Year On’](#) (2019), p. 3.

<sup>106</sup> [‘DfE Takes Action to Force Schools to Follow the “Baker Clause”](#), *Schools Week*, 11 May 2018.

<sup>107</sup> Anne Milton, [‘Ensuring Young People Have the “Best Possible” Careers Advice’](#), *FE Week*, 7 August 2018.

<sup>108</sup> [‘DfE Took No Action Against Schools That Ignored New Careers Duty’](#), *Schools Week*, 9 February 2019.

<sup>109</sup> House of Commons Education Committee, [The Apprenticeships Ladder of Opportunity: Quality not Quantity](#) (HC 344, 2017-19), paragraph 91.

In its [response](#), the Government said that Ofsted would continue to look at the implementation of the Baker Clause, and a ministerial round-table had concluded that they would test ways to apply the legislation, including writing directly to parents or the school, or ultimately by using the Secretary of State's legal powers to intervene.<sup>110</sup>

In May 2019, the then-Secretary of State for Education, Damian Hinds, stated academies could have their funding reduced if they fail to comply with the Baker clause, for breaching their funding agreement.<sup>111</sup>

In answer to a PQ in October 2019, the Government said it had contacted individual schools if it was reported to the DfE they were not complying with statutory duties in careers guidance.<sup>112</sup>

In response to a [House of Lords Debate on Vocational Education and Training](#) in October 2019, the then-Schools Minister Lord Agnew stated that the Baker Clause was being increasingly complied with:

We surveyed a number of schools recently and 76% stated that the duty is being partially complied with. A further review this summer found that compliance, although patchy, is improving. In January of this year, a report from the IPPR contained similar findings: 70% of providers found it difficult to access schools in their area, but one in three said the situation had improved. I am not complacent, and we will continue to put pressure on schools to be more open to this.<sup>113</sup>

In February 2020, the then-Minister, Lord Agnew, sent a letter to headteachers of all maintained secondary schools and academies asking them to comply with the Baker Clause.<sup>114</sup> It was reported in May 2020 that Ofsted criticised for the first time a school for failing to implement the Clause, following an inspection.<sup>115</sup>

## 6.4 Membership of Multi-Academy Trusts

In February 2019, Lord Baker and the then-Minister for the Schools System Lord Agnew wrote to the leaders of UTCs recommending that they join multi-academy Trusts (MATs) in order to aid recruitment and financial stability.<sup>116</sup> The Government hoped, since guidance in 2015, that other academies could act as “feeder schools” for a UTC.<sup>117</sup>

Previously, Lord Baker had opposed UTCs participating in MATs. *Schools Weekly* reported the peer in 2018 as saying:

<sup>110</sup> [Apprenticeships Ladder of Opportunity: Government Response](#) (12 December 2018), paragraph 27.

<sup>111</sup> [‘Schools Failing to Promote Vocational Qualifications Face Government Crackdown’](#), *The Independent*, 19 May 2019.

<sup>112</sup> [Vocational Guidance: Schools and Further Education, 137, 14 October 2019.](#)

<sup>113</sup> HL Deb, ‘[Vocational Education and Training](#)’, 28 October 2019, cc 858-859.

<sup>114</sup> [‘Informing young people about their next steps’](#), DfE Education in the Media, 7 February 2020

<sup>115</sup> [‘Ofsted raps first school over Baker Clause’](#), *FE Week*, 14 May 2020; Ofsted, [Inspection of King Edward VII Science and Sport College](#), 13 May 2020, p4

<sup>116</sup> [‘Baker U-Turns by Telling all UTCs They Could Survive by Joining multi-Academy Trusts’](#), *FE Week*, 15 March 2019.

<sup>117</sup> DfE, ‘[University Technical Colleges: How to Apply](#)’ (October 2015), paragraph 1.19

We don't want UTCs watered down, and that is the danger if they get into a MAT.

[...]

We have a unique model and the reason why UTCs have survived is that we actually patented the model so the government and companies and universities can't mess us around.<sup>118</sup>

In the same report, Lord Baker stated that the Trust had "worked out an arrangement" with MATs so that if UTCs join, they will continue to have an independent chair and board.

20 of the 50 UTCs in March 2019 were already part of multi-academy trusts.<sup>119</sup> Membership of a MAT formed part of the new [Memorandum of Understanding](#) between the DfE and the Baker Dearing Trust in June 2019:

The DfE and Baker Dearing share the belief that in most cases, membership of a strong Multi Academy Trust (MAT) is an important way to help UTCs succeed. This will help to ensure that a UTC has a strong educational offer, as well as aiding recruitment and financial stability.

The DfE shall inform and consult with Baker Dearing in respect of any proposals to transfer a UTC Trust to a MAT. Baker Dearing will work with the DfE, and the UTC Trust, to facilitate the successful and timely transfer of a UTC into a MAT.

The DfE expects a MAT into which a UTC transfers to understand and support the particular ethos of the UTC, and to be committed to safeguarding this. It expects nominees of the UTC's employer and university sponsor to form the majority on the UTC's Local Governing Body (LGB).<sup>120</sup>

The Permanent Secretary of the DfE, Jonathan Slater, told the Public Accounts Committee that, as of March 2020, 21 UTCs were part of a MAT and he expected this figure to rise to 30 "within a year or so".<sup>121</sup>

## 6.5 Impact of EBacc

The Government's ambition is to see 75% of pupils studying the EBacc subject combination at GCSE by 2022, and 90% by 2025. The EBacc combination is: English literature and language, maths, the sciences, geography or history, and a foreign language.<sup>122</sup>

After a [consultation](#), UTCs have been excluded from the EBacc entry target, but the measure will still be included in the institution's league table scores. The Government response recognised the specialist role of UTCs:

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<sup>118</sup> ['School Ditches UTC Name as it Joins Multi-Academy Trust'](#), *Schools Week*, 10 May 2018.

<sup>119</sup> ['Baker U-Turns by Telling all UTCS They Could Survive by Joining Multi-Academy Trusts'](#), *FE Week*, 15 March 2019.

<sup>120</sup> DfE, [Memorandum of Understanding Between Baker Dearing Educational Trust and the DfE](#) (June 2019), p. 2.

<sup>121</sup> Public Accounts Committee, [University Technical Colleges: Oral Evidence](#), 17 March 2020, Q11, 27, 28

<sup>122</sup> DfE, ['English Baccalaureate \(EBacc\)'](#), 20 August 2019.

UTCs, studio schools and a small number of further education colleges offering key stage 4 to pupils aged 14-16, provide a specialist technical and professional education. Pupils attending these institutions choose to specialise in a technical or professional area at age 14. Each of these types of school should consider carefully whether its specialist curriculum is compatible with the full EBacc. Where it is, they should offer the EBacc subjects and should consider on a case-by-case basis whether pupils should be entered for them.<sup>123</sup>

Previously, Lord Baker had criticised the EBacc as too narrow, and a cause of disengagement and decrease of attendance.<sup>124</sup>

The Library Briefing, [English Baccalaureate](#) (2019), provides more detail.

## 6.6 Introduction of T-Levels

In response to the [Sainsbury Review of 2016 into technical education](#), the Government said it would introduce “T-Levels”, as the technical equivalent of A-Levels. They will be taught through a mixture of classroom learning and industry placement. By 2020, 3 T-Level courses will be taught, a further 7 in September 2021, a further 15 courses rolled out by Autumn 2023.<sup>125</sup> The Baker-Dearing Trust welcomed the introduction of T-Levels.<sup>126</sup>

To express an interest in delivering T-Levels, UTC providers must:

- Have an Ofsted rating of Good or Outstanding (or be able to demonstrate that they have an equivalent standard of quality [...])
- Have at least satisfactory financial health, and
- Currently be delivering to a minimum of 10 qualifying students per T Level subject area they are applying to deliver; and
- Currently be delivering to a minimum of 50 qualifying students across all pathways they are applying to deliver.<sup>127</sup>

As of 11 June 2020, 1 UTC (Leigh) was to deliver T-Levels from 2020-2021, and an additional 2 UTCs from 2021-22.<sup>128</sup> From the 2022-23 academic year, an additional 8 UTCs were selected as providers of T-Levels.<sup>129</sup>

<sup>123</sup> DfE, [‘Implementing the English Baccalaureate’](#), paragraph 41.

<sup>124</sup> Lord Baker, [‘What Works for Children in the Most Privileged Schools Will Not Work for Everyone’](#), *Schools Week*, 7 November 2019.

<sup>125</sup> DfE, [‘Introduction of T-Levels’](#), 9 April 2020

<sup>126</sup> UTC, [‘Education System Leaving Young People Unprepared for Modern World’](#), 23 July 2019.

<sup>127</sup> DfE, [‘T-Level Action Plan 2018’](#) (December 2018), p.13.

<sup>128</sup> DfE, [‘Providers Selected to Deliver T-Levels from the 2020 to 2021 academic year’](#) (11 June 2020). DfE, [‘Further Providers Selected to Deliver T-Levels from the 2021 to 2022 academic year’](#) (11 June 2020). These are: Mulberry UTC and Thomas Telford UTC.

<sup>129</sup> DfE, [‘Further providers Selected to deliver T-Levels from the 2022 to 2023 academic year’](#) (11 June 2020). These are: Crewe Engineering and Design UTC, Lincoln UTC, the JCB Academy, University Technical College Norfolk, UTC Sheffield City Centre, UTC Sheffield Olympic Park, UTC South Durham and WMG Academy for Young Engineers (which manages 2 UTCs); UTC, [‘Eight UTCs have been chosen by the DfE to deliver new T-levels from September 2022’](#) (accessed 21 July 2020)

## 7. Reports on UTCs

### 7.1 Public Accounts Committee (2020)

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) published a report on [University Technical Colleges](#) in June 2020, following the National Audit Office (NAO) report issued in October 2020 (see Section 7.2). The Committee argued that the “taxpayer is paying over the odds for UTCs” and that the DfE did not “have a clear vision for UTCs in the future”.<sup>130</sup>

The Committee also said it was “concerned by the Department’s apparent lack of interest in the value for money that schools are getting from using taxpayer’s money to pay the licence fee” to the Baker-Dearing Trust, which it noted had increased to an annual fee of £10,000 in 2019/20.<sup>131</sup>

The Committee made four recommendations for the DfE, focusing on increasing student recruitment, improving the financial sustainability of UTCs and improving the tools used to evaluate the programme:

- The Department should work with those UTCs that have higher occupancy levels to identify and share lessons and good practice for other UTCs that are struggling to attract students.
- The Department should set clear three-year financial targets for each UTC. At the end of the three-year period, it should be prepared to close UTCs that are not meeting those [financial] targets.
- The Department should, within three months, write to [The Committee] to explain how it uses data on student destinations to track the performance of UTCs, and what steps it will take to better inform parents about how they can use these data to assess the benefits of a UTC education.
- The Department should work with UTCs to obtain the information necessary to gain assurance about the value schools are getting from the licence fee they pay to the Baker Dearing Educational Trust, and write to [The Committee] with its findings within three months.<sup>132</sup>

The Baker-Dearing Trust “welcome[d] the PAC’s recommendation that the DfE should support the sharing of ‘good practice’ around the UTC programme”. In response to the fourth recommendation, the Trust said the licence fee payment helped deliver:

Hands-on educational, financial, student recruitment, and multi-academy trust rebrokerage support for all UTCs, as well as fulfilling the central role of government liaison and raising the programme’s profile.<sup>133</sup>

<sup>130</sup> Public Accounts Committee, [Taxpayer is paying over the odds for UTCs](#), 10 June 2020

<sup>131</sup> Public Accounts Committee, [University Technical Colleges](#), HC 87, 10 June 2020, para 4

<sup>132</sup> [Ibid](#), paras 1-4

<sup>133</sup> Baker-Dearing Educational Trust, [‘Public Accounts Committee recommends DfE should do more to support UTCs’](#), accessed 22 July 2020

The Trust also submitted a [full response](#) to the Committee, which stated that a UTC education “costs more per pupil than a mainstream education” and the Department should resultingly consider the funding of pre-16 technical courses. The response also defended the licence fee and the role of the Trust, stating that the Trust had:

Over the past five years [...] spent an average of £31,375 per UTC per annum, and in return received an average of £6,170 per UTC per annum in Licence Fee income and a further £1,819 per UTC per annum in the form of direct grants from the DfE.<sup>134</sup>

The DfE response to the Committee has not yet been [published](#).

## 7.2 NAO Report (2019)

The NAO [Investigation into University Technical Colleges](#) investigated the challenges to the viability of UTCs, given their issues of recruitment and concerns for the finances as a result. This followed the NAO’s 2018 report on [Delivering STEM \(Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics\) Skills for the Economy](#).

On the performance of UTCs, the NAO report found:

3. UTC’s revenue deficits have grown and accounted for nearly 10% of the total cumulative revenue deficits reported by all academy trusts in 2017/18 (p.5)
4. At July 2019, the Education and Skills Funding Agency (the ESFA) had significant concerns about the finances of 13 UTCs (p.6).
9. Compared with other secondary schools, a higher proportion of students from UTCs progress into sustained apprenticeships and a lower proportion into education (p.8).
10. At August 2019, Ofsted had rated 52% of UTCs as good or outstanding, compared with 76% of all secondary schools (p.8).
11. UTCs have performed less well than other secondary schools against key measures of performance, but the Department considers that not all its metrics are appropriate for UTCs because of UTCs’ technical focus and age range (p.9)

## Response

In response to the report, the DfE stated that it remained committed to UTCs and had taken action to raise their profile in order to encourage recruitment:

We’re committed to ensuring people have access to high-quality technical education across the country, and University Technical Colleges are helping to deliver on that, with 21% of pupils progressing into apprenticeships after completing their post 16 education, more than double the national average.

As this report recognises, we have taken significant action to support and raise the profile of University Technical Colleges to make sure they continue to play a role in our diverse education system and provide the skills that employers need.<sup>135</sup>

<sup>134</sup> [Baker Dearing Educational Trust to the Public Accounts Committee](#), 22 July 2020, Sections 3 and 5

<sup>135</sup> DfE, [‘Ensuring Access to High Quality Technical Education’](#), 30 October 2019.

Lord Baker, Chair of the Baker Education Trust also published a [response](#) saying the DfE continued to back the programme and UTCs should be measured against student destinations:

This report records the price of everything and the value of nothing. UTCs should be judged by the success of their students becoming apprentices, studying STEM subjects at a University and getting a job as a technician or an engineer. For that, we have the best destination data of any schools in the country. Because of this, the Department has encouraged us to make applications for new UTCs and we are working with local employers and universities for the next round in November.<sup>136</sup>

### 7.3 Education Policy Institute (2018)

The Education Policy Institute (EPI) published its Report [UTCs: Are They Delivering for Young People and the Economy?](#) in 2018. The Chair of the EPI is David Laws, who had served as Schools Minister from 2012 to 2015.

The report assessed UTCs against several measures, including:

**The performance of UTC students against Progress 8 Scores and EBacc components.** The report showed that 3% of UTC students achieved all EBacc components including a 9-5 pass in English and Maths GCSE in 2016/17, compared to 22% in all state-funded mainstream schools.<sup>137</sup> The average attainment 8 score was also lower on average: 37.5 compared to 47.1 in other institutions.<sup>138</sup> One potential reason for lower progress is that UTCs do not enter pupils into enough eligible subjects for Attainment 8: 65% of UTC pupils enter 10 eligible subjects in 2016/17 compared to 86% nationwide.<sup>139</sup>

The report also showed the lower **levels of continuation to key stage 5** in UTC compared to other institutions. In 2015/16, 49% of pupils continued in a UTC, 29% in other education, 11% an apprenticeship and 12% were not in education.<sup>140</sup>

**The TechBacc**, a performance measure introduced by the Government designed to offer three A-levels in a vocational qualification, an approved mathematics qualification and an extended project, was found to have not been taken up by UTCs. Only 3% of UTC students achieved the TechBacc, though this was higher than the 0.1% nationally in 2016/17.<sup>141</sup>

In terms of **post-Key Stage 5 destinations**, in 2014/15 a lower proportion of UTC students moved into Higher Education (41% versus 50% in state funded mainstream), a similar proportion into employment

<sup>136</sup> Baker-Dearing Educational Trust, '[Response to Report on UTCs published by the National Audit Office](#)', 30 October 2019

<sup>137</sup> EPI, '[UTCs: Are They Delivering for Young People and the Economy](#)' (October 2018), p. 32.

<sup>138</sup> [Ibid](#), p. 33.

<sup>139</sup> [Ibid](#), p. 34.

<sup>140</sup> [Ibid](#), p. 42.

<sup>141</sup> [Ibid](#), p. 56.

(20% in both) and a higher proportion into apprenticeships (20% versus 7%).<sup>142</sup>

The report recommended:

#### **Consider moving UTC admissions to age 16**

In a number of countries, students make transitions before age 16, but this is not the case in England. Regardless of what the “right” age might be, the reality is England has a pre- and post-16 system. This means that admission at age 14 is not the norm and has failed to convince enough students, parents, carers and schools of its benefits, and there is no evidence that participation in UTCs at age 14 is likely to rise significantly without more fundamental changes to the education system. This has also made it difficult for many UTCs to remain viable. [...]

#### **UTCs could become flagship level 3 technical institutions**

[...] With their recruitment age set at 16, UTCs should focus on delivering high-quality existing technical qualifications and eventually T-levels relevant to local and national skill needs. With UTCs offering only Key Stage 5, there would be an opportunity for them to deliver a differentiated, high-quality level 3 technical provision.

[...]

#### **Better destinations measures are needed**

Currently, destination measures capture student destinations two terms after finishing Key Stage 5, but take no account of the educational pathway that young people have taken during Key Stage 5, nor their grades. This means it is not possible to differentiate between those institutions which have “good” destinations on account of their intake and those that are actually effective at leading young people into further education, training or suitable employment.

[...] (p.11)

The report also criticised pupil outcomes at Key Stages 4 and 5.

The report also raised concerns that half of UTC students do not continue from Key Stage 4 to Key Stage 5 in the same institution, despite the intention of UTCs to offer 14-19 education.<sup>143</sup>

## **Response**

In response to the report, Lord Baker stated that UTCs should not be compared to “normal” schools. The Deputy Chief Executive of the Association of Colleges urged caution at the recommendations, describing the 16-18 sector as “already a chaotic and underfunded market”.<sup>144</sup>

## **7.4 IPPR (2017)**

The IPPR think tank published [Tech Transitions: UTCs, Studio Schools, and Technical and Vocational Education in England's Schools](#) in 2017. It argued that the 14-19 model of recruitment was holding UTCs from

<sup>142</sup> [Ibid](#), p. 59.

<sup>143</sup> [Ibid](#), pp. 8-9.

<sup>144</sup> [‘Scrap UTC 14-19 Model, Says Former Schools Minister’](#), *FE Week*, 11 October 2018.

fulfilling their potential, and should be repurposed to provide specialist technical education to students aged 16-19. On UTCs, the report recommended:

UTCs should become high-quality providers of technical education for students aged 16–19. All new UTCs should open according to this revised remit. Existing UTCs should also largely convert to become 16–19 providers, with the exception of those with a record of high performance.

– UTCs should be made to align with STEM-focussed technical routes to be introduced as part of the government’s Post-16 Skills Plan, and focus on the delivery of level 2 and 3 qualifications (including T levels) associated with up to two of these routes.

– They should retain their strong links with industry and university partners, and provide a high-quality pathway into university, work or an institute of technology.

– Only UTCs with a positive Ofsted rating and good pupil outcomes should be permitted to remain open as 14–19 free schools (p.5.)

The report found that on average UTCs filled around 60% of planned Year 10 places from 2013/14 to 2015/16.<sup>145</sup> High recruitment in initial years was followed by significant falls in the following years: Daventry UTC filled 79% of planned places in 2013/14, falling to 33% in 2015/16.<sup>146</sup>

On barriers to recruitment at aged 14, the [report](#) cited three:

The first and most important set of barriers to 14–19 institutions being able to recruit sufficient numbers of pupils is structural, and is driven by the desire among mainstream secondary schools to protect their budgets by preventing an outflow of pupils in year 10.

The system of per-pupil funding, by which schools receive government funding, creates a strong incentive for secondary schools to operate at full capacity, which requires the ability to attract sufficient numbers of new pupils at year 7 and retain as many as possible thereafter (p.21)

Because 14–19 institutions are legally defined as free schools, they do not require the approval of the local authority before they are established. Instead, the decision over whether or not to approve the opening of a new 14–19 institution is taken entirely by the DfE. This can lead, in some cases, to 14–19 institutions being set up without prior consultation and engagement locally. Consultation and engagement is vital if 14–19 institutions are to be able to generate positive relationships with key stakeholders, dispel myths, and embed themselves within local education markets. Where it is absent or minimal, though, adversarial relationships can be hardened, communication channels fail to materialise, and future cooperation is jeopardised (p.23).

The third set of barriers to 14–19 institutions being able to recruit sufficient numbers of pupils is societal, and is driven by the extent to which perceptions regarding the relative benefits of academic and technical/vocational education are embedded (p.25)

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<sup>145</sup> IPPR, [Tech Transitions](#) (2017), p. 19.

<sup>146</sup> [Ibid.](#), p. 20.

The report warned against a “cycle of decline”, where an inability to overcome low recruitment numbers in the immediate years after opening result in reduced funding from the Government, encouraging a dilution of both the UTC brand and intake as the school broadens its focus to attract a wider range of pupils.<sup>147</sup>

In its response to the report, the Baker Dearing Trust re-iterated that it believed 14 was the right age to start at a UTC, and that legal requirements that local authorities should write to the parents of Year 9 pupils informing them about UTCs and allowing UTC representatives to visit local schools from September 2017 “will lead to a further significant increase in applications at 14”.<sup>148</sup>

## 7.5 NFER Report (2017)

The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) published [University Technical Colleges: Beneath the Headlines](#) in June 2017. The report was critical of the accountability measures used to judge UTCs, because:

- Students attend a UTC for just two of the five years between Key Stages 2 and 4, but UTCs are held to account for their students’ progress over the full five years;
- Academic performance measures do not fully recognise the technical and vocational share of the UTCs’ curriculum or some of the qualifications that their employer sponsors wish their students to study;
- UTCs are set up with the explicit intention to devote a significant part of their curriculum to focusing on employability skills and employer-led projects, which the headline accountability measures do not take into account.<sup>149</sup>

The report made 6 recommendations, focusing on methods of accountability and increasing recruitment:

1. Independently assess students attending UTCs at the point of entry so that progress while in the institution can be properly measured and UTCs can be held to account for the time that the student attends the institution.
2. Urgently examine how well the current headline accountability measures fit with the curriculum and purpose of UTCs, with the aim of ensuring that they do not disadvantage UTCs (or their students). If this concludes the headline measures do not assess UTCs fairly, consideration should be given as to how the existing measures might be adapted or complemented with additional measures (for example, a greater focus on destination and employability skills measures) to better assess UTC performance.
3. Review the non-accredited technical and vocational qualifications on offer in UTCs and provide guidance about suitable accredited alternatives where they exist. If

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<sup>147</sup> [Ibid](#), p. 51.

<sup>148</sup> Charles Parker, [‘Starting Technical Education at 14 Gives Young People the Foundation They Need’](#), *The Times*, 1 June 2017.

<sup>149</sup> NFER, [University Technical Colleges: Behind the Headlines](#) (2017), p.12.

necessary, work with awarding bodies to develop suitable qualifications that can be accredited.

4. Conduct further work to review whether there are other disincentives in the system (for example, the impact on a school's funding) which may be hindering UTCs from recruiting pupils, and take appropriate action to address these to ensure there is a level playing field.
5. Commission research into higher attaining UTCs to identify why they are more successful, and how they can be further supported so this can be replicated when future UTCs are set up.
6. Continue to carefully monitor the performance of UTCs, and investigate their performance based on more appropriate performance measures.

Unless UTCs get more support from Government to overcome some of the inherent challenges they face, we believe they will continue to struggle and be vulnerable to closure. Over time, this may damage the credibility of the technical / vocational sector. If the Government is not prepared to provide this support, it might be best for it to reconsider the rationale and purpose of UTCs.

## Response

The Baker Dearing Education Trust [broadly welcomed the report](#) and called upon the DfE to take further action to strengthen UTCs, saying that:

The findings are encouraging and show that the UTC model is now starting to work, despite a number of barriers, some of which are reflected in the NFER analysis.

[...]

### **We urge the government to support the UTC programme in the following ways:**

1. Review the accountability measures to ensure that students and parents are provided with a comparable set of information.
2. Collect data on the destinations of all students at the point they leave education.
3. Give greater recognition to all the skills students gain at UTCs.
4. Act to stop schools who encourage their students to transfer to a UTC without any assessment of whether this is the right move for those children.
5. Introduce a standardised measure of student attainment prior to entering a UTC.
6. Consider the introduction of a technical premium that recognises the funding challenges and reflects the longer teaching day and the higher capital maintenance cost of teaching a 14 to 19 vocational and technical education.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> [‘University Technical Colleges: Beneath the Headlines’](#), FE News, 23 June 2016.

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