



Media release

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New report raises alerts over growing threats to skills provision for UK workforce

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A new report launched today (Monday 17th November 2014) warns that the UK's system of training and skills provision is growing increasingly out of step with the needs of the modern economy and that change is needed if the UK workforce is to remain competitively skilled.

The report by the Skills Commission raises four 'strategic alerts' that require 'urgent attention from all players' across government and the skills sector to ensure a 'vocational education system that is totally attuned to work'. It further warns that existing government strategies are hindering, rather than helping the creation of a highly skilled individuals that are ready to enter the flexible 21st century economy.

The report, entitled '*Still in Tune? The Skills System and the Changing Structures of Work*', follows a 9-month inquiry into skills provision and its appropriateness to the continually changing structures of work in the UK. The inquiry, supported by OCR, was chaired by Dame Ruth Silver, President of the Further Education Leaders Trust (FETL) and Barry Sheerman MP, former Chair of the House of Commons Education Select Committee.

The final report identifies four distinct trends the Commission argues have developed into "significant barriers to a successful skills policy" capable of providing a labour market skilled to meet the needs of both individuals and employers across the UK economy. These four strategic alerts are:

1. Uncertainty around the responsibility for training in an increasingly flexible labour market.
2. Declining social mobility owing to a reduction in the alignment of skills provision to work.
3. Fragmentation in the system making it difficult for employers to engage.
4. Alarming policy dissonance between different central Government departments.

The report calls on government to do more in this Parliament and the next to ensure the UK's skills system is reformed in order that it can continue its position as the 'foundation of the nation's future growth, innovation, and productivity'.

Commenting on the publication of the report, inquiry co-chair Dame Ruth Silver said:

"We need significant and cultural changes to occur if we are to ensure that the UK workforce is equipped with the skills the UK economy needs. But this shift cannot be achieved by focusing on individual components of the system in isolation from each other. If this inquiry has taught us anything it is that we need greater 'systems thinking' from all players to ensure that we are well equipped to meet the challenges of a changing labour market and society."

Fellow co-chair Barry Sheerman MP added:

“We must understand that the UK’s skills system is simply not adequately matched to the modern structures of work in 2014, and will become further misaligned in the coming years unless action is taken now. Siloed thinking from government departments, a lack of engagement between major components of the system such as schools, colleges and employers, and a narrow political focus on some aspects of vocational provision or particular policy levers is hampering our success.”

Charlotte Bosworth, Director of Skills and Employment at OCR, commented:

“As an exam board that develops technical and professional qualifications, OCR strives to incorporate the values, habits and characteristics required for success in the workplace, alongside maths and English, into what young people study. But tinkering with qualifications alone won’t fix the skills gap. We need to put the learner at the heart of a broader curriculum and to be more flexible in how we recognise and record their progress in developing new skills.”

The report will be launched formally in Parliament on Monday 17th November.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

- [Download the report here](#)
- Hi-res images are available to media on request, including images of Barry Sheerman MP, Dame Ruth Silver, the report front cover and report content.
- Inquiry co-chairs Dame Ruth Silver and Barry Sheerman MP are available for interview. Journalists should contact Peter Barrett on peter.barrett@policyconnect.org.uk, 0207 202 8587.
- The report will be formally launched in Parliament on Monday 17th November at 13.30, in the House of Lords. Media are invited to attend. Contact Peter Barrett (above) to register to attend.
- **The inquiry was supported by OCR.**

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA) is a leading UK awarding body, providing a wide range of qualifications to meet the needs of learners of all ages and abilities. OCR qualifications include AS/A Levels, GCSEs, Cambridge Nationals, Cambridge Technicals, Entry Level qualifications, and vocational qualifications in areas such as IT, business, languages, teaching/training, administration and secretarial skills.

Each year more than three million students gain OCR qualifications, which are offered by 13,000 centres including schools, sixth form colleges, FE colleges, training providers, voluntary organisations, local authorities, and businesses ranging from SMEs to multi-national organisations.

OCR is part of the Cambridge Assessment Group.

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The logo for OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA) features the letters 'OCR' in a large, bold, blue, sans-serif font. The letters have a slight 3D effect with a shadow underneath.

Oxford Cambridge and RSA

- The [Skills Commission](#) is an independent body comprising leading figures from across the education sector that meets every month in Parliament to discuss important issues in skills, training and further education policy. The Commission is co-chaired by Barry Sheerman MP and Dame Ruth Silver. Commission members

include parliamentarians from all the main parties, and highly experienced practitioners from across the skills sector.