

17.12.2025

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**Title**

What future for UK higher education?

**Publisher**

Berkeley, 2010

**Collation**

19 Bl.

**Publication year**

2010

**Series**

(CSHE Research and Occasional Paper Series ; 5.10)

**Source/Footnote**

Internet: <http://cshe.berkeley.edu/publications/docs/ROPS.AtkinsonPelfrey.ScienceUniv.7.1.10.pdf>

**Inventory number**

44206

**Keywords**

Ausland : Großbritannien : Hochschulwesen allgemein ; Hochschule und Staat : allgemein

**Abstract**

Historically, the UK system has been one of the most successful in combining excellence with access. However the favorable conditions that British universities and colleges have enjoyed in recent years, associated in large part with the introduction of higher tuition fees in 2006, are coming to an end. British universities and colleges face a future of static or even falling local demand, increasing local and international competition, severe public and private expenditure constraints, increased regulation, and greater difficulties in aligning costs with income. In the first instance, these pressures are likely to lead to increased collaboration, often in the form of mergers, where a stronger institution absorbs a

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weaker partner. In the medium to longer term, the creation of much sharper differences between institutions, and an even more pronounced hierarchy, seem probable. As well as setting back access, these developments (if they occur) will have very adverse consequences for the cohesion, health and standing of UK higher education. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)

**Signature**

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