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Cuts trim HE reforms to the bone

The Government's two cuts to HE expenditure as part of its mid-year budget review preserve the essence of the Government's agenda but remove one of few additional funding streams resulting from the Bradley Review.

Restoring mathematics, statistics and science units to the band 2 charge has no impact on university revenue and is unlikely to discourage many students. The IRU has argued (Base Funding Review) that all students should pay the same amount regardless of course. The change is an accidental step in this direction, but rather than being funded through reduction in the band 3 charge to other students it will be used to save Government expenditure.

On performance funding, the Government has pulled back from a key Bradley recommendation providing one part of the 10% funding increase universities badly need to meet the Government's quality expectations. The funds provided a major incentive for universities to keep improving student learning outcomes, and some funding to do so. The performance funding gave a focus for developing new measures of student learning. Without that focus it is not clear it remains valuable to continue with their development.

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