



All-Party Parliamentary University Group

Weekly update

08 – 12 September 2025

A regular digest of House of Commons, House of Lords, and higher education sector business.

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Click on the items in the table of contents to go straight to debates, answers, forthcoming business, etc.



Contents

Parliamentary business	4
The UK's future relationship with the US - International Relations and Defence Committee oral evidence session	4
Forthcoming business	6
Conference Recess	6
Written questions and statements	7
Home Office: Palestinians: Academic Freedom	7
Department for Education: Students: Disadvantaged	7
Department for Education: Students: Loans	8
Department for Education: Students: Cost of Living	8
Department for Education: Students: Loans	8
Department for Education: Students: Loans	9
Home Office: Visas: Students	9
Home Office: Chevening Scholarships Programme: Gaza	10
Home Office: Visas: Gaza	10
Home Office: Visas: Gaza	11
Home Office: Overseas Students: Gaza	11
Home Office: Overseas Students: Dependants	12
Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Science and Discovery Centres	12
Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Artificial Intelligence: Innovation	13
Sector news	14
Government Reshuffle	14
Major skills boost at the heart of transformative new Defence Industrial Strategy	14
UK wide ballot paves way for national strike action across university campuses	15
Higher Education Commission inquiry to examine how education and training pathways can support delivery of the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan	16
Cold spots: Mapping inequality in SHAPE provision in UK higher education - British Academy report	17

The University of Greenwich and the University of Kent have announced plans to form a “multi-university group”	18
Student digital experience insights survey 2024/25 – Jisc report	19
Higher education and its benefits at all-time high across OECD countries – Education at a Glance 2025	20
Research at risk: impacts of financial constraints on UK universities -UUK report	21

Parliamentary business

The UK's future relationship with the US - International Relations and Defence Committee oral evidence session

On Wednesday 10 September, the House of Lords International Relations and Defence Committee took evidence as part of their ongoing inquiry into 'the UK's future relationship with the US.' Witnesses included:

- Simon Mellor, Deputy Chief Executive, Arts and Museums, Arts Council England
- John Raine, Chair of the Marshall Association Commemoration Commission, Marshall Scholarships
- Jamie Arrowsmith, Director of Universities UK International

The Chair, Lord De Mauley (Conservative), began by probing on how the UK benefits from close UK-US academic collaboration and how essential the US is for the UK's academic and university research sector. Jamie Arrowsmith stressed that international collaboration was essential, highlighting that while the UK had excellence it lacked the scale to fully take on challenges alone. The UK therefore benefited from the scale and strength of the US partnership, which was described as a two-way relationship. John Raine noted the talent that Marshall scholars brought to UK universities and the strong relationships that they fostered. Jamie Arrowsmith noted potential cuts to the US Title IV programme to study abroad and wider cuts to research as a challenge.

Lord Darroch of Kew (Crossbench) asked about recent US policy changes and how it affected UK-US collaborative projects. John Raine noted closures in courses in the US which scholars were choosing to pursue in the UK instead. Jamie Arrowsmith said the policy changes and announcements had moved at pace and was creating a difficult operating environment. He noted changes in research priorities in the US, the politicisation of research, and cuts to funding as posing particular challenges.

Lord Robertson (Labour) spoke to the politicisation of research, asking whether it was confined to the US or had wider implications. Jamie Arrowsmith noted that there were global trends towards more strategic and directed approach to research funding but acknowledged that the removal of certain areas of research funding did speak to some politicisation, particularly in comparison to the UK.

Lord Houghton (Crossbench) probed on the special relationship with the US and how enduring it was. Jamie Arrowsmith acknowledged the legitimate concerns but highlighted that universities were familiar with navigating complex geopolitical relationships and had the ability to realign. The need for the UK and US to have a deep and constructive relationship with the US would endure. John Raine described the relationship as special, based on the many characteristics the countries and their university systems share.

Baroness Blackstone (Labour) noted the difficult operating environment and, picking up on Jamie Arrowsmith's previous comments, asked whether Universities UK International was working with the UK Government on trying to mitigate these. Jamie Arrowsmith highlighted the active conversation with the UK Government and UKRI to share insights and intelligence on the issues. One of the key mitigations he mentioned was the extra flexibility UKRI was granting for UK partners.

Lord Alderdice (Liberal Democrat) asked about the opportunity cost of collaborating with the US at the expense of other international partners and this was followed by Lord Bruce (Liberal Democrat) who asked whether some institutions or individuals would look to sustain relationships despite the administration's direction. Jamie Arrowsmith noted the national interest to sustain strong research relationships with US, China, and EU. He stressed that the relationships had been built over many years and that these needed to be maintained.

Baroness Fraser of Craigmaddie (Conservative) sought to probe further on how enduring some of these trends would be. Jamie Arrowsmith spoke about the need to be strategic and invest accordingly. He added that the Trump administration had a more transactional view of international relationships which the UK needed be mindful of.

You can [watch the session](#).

Forthcoming business

Conference Recess

The House of Commons will rise for Conference recess on 17 September and is scheduled to return on 13 October, while the House of Lords will rise on 19 September, returning on 13 October.

Written questions and statements

Home Office: Palestinians: Academic Freedom

Patricia Ferguson (Labour): (UIN70102) To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether Palestinian academics with offers of (a) positions and (b) study placements at universities in the UK can be issued with visas to allow them to travel to the UK.

Seema Malhotra: I refer my Hon Friend to the statement to the House made by the Home Secretary on 1 September.

Department for Education: Students: Disadvantaged

Helen Hayes (Labour): (UIN 70618) To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to ensure disadvantaged students have access to the financial support they need to remain in university.

Janet Daby: The department wants to support the aspiration of every person who meets the requirements and wants to go to university, regardless of their background, where they live and their personal circumstances.

The government has increased maximum loans for living costs by 3.1% for the 2025/26 academic year, in line with forecast RPIX inflation. The government also provides means-tested non-repayable grants to low-income full-time students with children and adults who are financially dependent on them. Students with disabilities can apply for non-means tested disabled students' allowance to support additional disability-related study costs. For the 2025/26 academic year, maximum dependants' grants and disabled students' allowance are being increased by 3.1%.

Student Premium funding rates that are available through the Strategic Priorities Grant are being maintained for 2025/26 to support successful outcomes for students. All English higher education providers registered with the Office for Students (OfS) that intend to charge higher level tuition fees must have an Access and Participation Plan approved by the OfS.

Department for Education: Students: Loans

Helen Hayes (Labour): (UIN 70619) To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to review the thresholds for maintenance loans.

Janet Daby: The government recognises the impact that the cost-of-living crisis has had on students. However, we need to ensure that the student funding system is financially sustainable.

The government has increased maximum loans for living costs for full-time and part-time undergraduate students by 3.1% for the 2025/26 academic year. A 3.1% increase is in line with forecast inflation based on the RPIX inflation index.

Department for Education: Students: Cost of Living

Helen Hayes (Labour): (UIN 70617) To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the average difference between (a) maintenance loan and (b) living costs for university students.

Janet Daby: Through the student loan system, the highest levels of maintenance support are paid to students from the lowest income families, while those from more affluent families receive a smaller contribution towards their living costs. In addition to support for living costs from Student Finance England, students may be eligible for additional financial assistance from their university.

The Student Income and Expenditure Survey 2021/22 reported on the average living costs for full-time and part-time English undergraduate students and across different demographic groups for the 2021/22 academic year. The survey, including all income and expenditure tables, can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/student-income-and-expenditure-survey-2021-to-2022>.

Department for Education: Students: Loans

Simon Opher (Labour): (UIN 69473) To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 19 December 2024 to Question 18684 on Students: Loans, what progress she has made in developing a longer-term plan for higher education reform.

Janet Daby: The department is determined that the higher education (HE) system should deliver for our economy, for providers and for students. Whilst we have already taken action to help move the sector towards a more stable financial footing, we recognise that a real change of approach is needed, both from the government and from the sector itself, to support our broader plans for HE. That is why we will publish our plans for HE reform soon as part of the Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper.

Department for Education: Students: Loans

Mims Davies (Conservative): (UIN 69911) To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of launching a comprehensive review of student loan interest rates.

Janet Daby: Student loans are subject to interest so that those who can afford to do so contribute to the full cost of their degree. To consider both students and taxpayers and ensure the real value of the loans over the repayment term, interest rates are linked to inflation.

Interest rates on student loans do not affect monthly repayments made by borrowers. Regular repayments are based on a fixed percentage of earnings above the applicable student loan repayment threshold. Any outstanding debt, including interest built up, is written off after the loan term ends (or in case of death or disability) at no detriment to the borrower.

A full equality impact assessment of how the student loan reforms may affect graduates, including detail on changes to average lifetime repayments under Plan 5, was produced and published under the previous government in February 2022 and can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-reform-equality-impact-assessment>.

Home Office: Visas: Students

Blake Stephenson (Conservative): (UIN 72962) To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an estimate of the number of Student Visa holders who have overstayed their visa in each of the last five years.

Alex Norris: The government has launched a direct messaging campaign to remind students their visas are expiring. The first-of-its-kind communication comes during the autumn period where asylum applications typically spike and is part of continued Home Office measures to improve visa compliance.

Nearly 10,000 students and dependants received the guidance, with thousands more expected to receive it over the coming weeks as their visa expiry dates approach. It warns that claims without merit will be swiftly and robustly refused, and those without a legal right to remain in the UK must leave or face removal.

Information on completeness of exit checks data are found within the statistical reports and the '[Home Office statistics on exit checks: user guide](#)'. The most recent developments are found in the '[Developments in Exit Checks](#)'.

The Home Office does not compile statistics on the number of people who overstay their visa. The Home Office has previously published statistics on the number of visa holders who have left the UK prior to expiry of their visa in the [Reports on statistics relating to exit checks](#). This release covers the period from the year ending March 2017 to the year ending March 2020.

Home Office: Chevening Scholarships Programme: Gaza

Mike Wood (Conservative): (UIN 74278) To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether the students from Gaza granted permission to study in the United Kingdom under the Chevening scheme will be subject to any security checks or vetting.

Mike Tapp: Robust security checks will be undertaken on the Chevening Scholars and all students who enter the UK through this process. Biometrics will be collected as part of the visa application process and prior to the final decision on granting entry to the UK as a student.

Home Office: Visas: Gaza

Edward Morello (Liberal Democrats): (UIN 74197) To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many students from Gaza that were awarded UK scholarships in the 2024-25 academic year are unable to take up their places due to lack of access to biometric enrolment facilities.

Mike Tapp: The Home Office does not currently publish information on the number of Gaza students with UK scholarships for 2024-25 who are unable to enrol due to the absence of biometric facilities.

The Home Office has put in place systems to issue expedited visas, with biometric checks conducted prior to arrival in the UK for all Chevening scholars from Gaza. We are in the process of doing the same for a group of students in Gaza who have been

awarded fully funded scholarships covering course fees and living costs at UK universities so they can start their studies in Autumn 2025. The Government is doing everything it can to support their safe exit and onward travel to the UK. The situation on the ground in Gaza makes this extremely challenging.

Home Office: Visas: Gaza

Edward Morello (Liberal Democrats): (UIN 74198) To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has had discussions with the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs on biometric processing for students from Gaza seeking to take up scholarships in the UK.

Mike Tapp: The Home Office has put in place systems to issue expedited visas, with biometric checks conducted prior to arrival for all Chevening Scholars from Gaza.

We are in the process of doing the same for a group of students who have been awarded fully funded scholarships covering course fees and living costs at UK universities so they can start their studies in Autumn 2025.

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office is doing everything it can to support their safe exit and onward travel to the UK, while accepting that the situation on the ground in Gaza makes this extremely challenging.

Grouped Questions: 74195, 74196

Home Office: Overseas Students: Gaza

Wendy Chamberlain (Liberal Democrats): (UIN 75681) To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will provide the (a) criteria and (b) arrangements for evacuating students from Gaza to the relevant (i) universities and (ii) hon. Members.

Mike Tapp: I refer the Honourable Member to the previous Home Secretary's oral statement to the House on 1 September 2025 on strengthening border security and reforms to the asylum system. Further details will be set out in due course.

The Home Office has put in place systems to issue expedited visas, with biometric checks conducted prior to arrival for all Chevening Scholars from Gaza.

We are in the process of doing the same for a group of students who have been awarded fully funded scholarships covering course fees and living costs at UK universities so they can start their studies in Autumn 2025.

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office is doing everything it can to support their safe exit and onward travel to the UK. The situation on the ground in Gaza makes this extremely challenging.

Home Office: Overseas Students: Dependants

Stephen Gethins (Scottish National Party): (UIN 75656) To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department plans to evacuate the dependents of students with UK scholarships as well as those students.

Mike Tapp: The Government is prioritising those with fully-funded, verifiable, scholarships commencing in the autumn term. This decision has been made for these students due to their potential role in rebuilding Gaza in the future.

I refer the Honourable Member to the then-Home Secretary's oral statement to the House of Commons on 1 September 2025 on strengthening border security and reforms to the asylum system. Further details will be set out in due course.

Source

Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Science and Discovery Centres

Chi Onwurah (Labour): (UIN 74264) To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether the science and discovery centres fall within the remit of his Department.

Kanishka Narayan: The UK's Science and Discovery Centres have an important role in engaging the public, with science and technology and in inspiring young people, particularly those from underrepresented groups, to consider studying STEM subjects and related careers.

However, while some centres do carry out research in addition to their informal science learning activities their primary role is as visitor centres focussed on the role of science in the UK's culture. While the department and partners such as UKRI have provided support for particular programmes managed by science centres, as institutions they do not fall within DSIT's remit.

DSIT is currently planning to engage with DCMS to discuss how government's relationship with these important institutions can best be supported going forward.

Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Artificial Intelligence: Innovation

Abtisam Mohamed (Labour): (UIN 74809) To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the decision to restrict TechExpert scholarships to domestic PhD students on the UK's international competitiveness in Artificial Intelligence innovation.

Kanishka Narayan: The Government is committed to strengthening the UK's position as a global leader in AI. While TechExpert scholarships focus on domestic talent, we continue to attract top international talent through initiatives such as the AI Global Fellowships and the Spärck AI scholarships. These programmes ensure the UK retains world-class expertise, supports frontier research, and sustains its competitive edge in AI innovation. This balance to championing our domestic pipeline while attracting some of the world's best AI minds to the UK is key to maximising our AI ambitions.

Sector news

Government Reshuffle

From 5 September the Prime Minister, Rt Hon Keir Starmer MP, conducted his first major reshuffle since assuming government. Key posts include:

- Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson MP remains as Secretary of State for Education
- Rt Hon Rachel Reeves MP remains as Chancellor of the Exchequer
- Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP as Foreign Secretary
- Rt Hon Shabana Mahmood MP as Home Secretary
- Rt Hon Steve Reed OBE MP as Secretary of State for Housing, Communities, and Local Government
- Rt Hon Pat McFadden MP as Secretary of State for Work and Pensions
- Rt Hon Peter Kyle MP as Secretary of State for Business and Trade
- Rt Hon Liz Kendall MP as Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology
- Rt Hon Baroness Smith of Malvern as Minister for Skills in the Department for Education and the Department for Work and Pensions
- Lord Vallance KCB as Minister for Science, Innovation, and Technology and Minister of State in the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero

The [full list of appointments can be read here](#).

Major skills boost at the heart of transformative new Defence Industrial Strategy

UK jobs and skills will be the driving force behind making the country a defence industrial leader under a transformative new strategy that launched on 8 September, including the creation of five defence-focused Technical Excellence Colleges to ensure industry has the workforce needed for the future.

The Defence Industrial Strategy (DIS) will further back British businesses, putting the UK at the leading edge of defence innovation in NATO and ensuring this government's record uplift in defence spending delivers a lasting dividend for people in every nation and region.

New funding of £182 million will support a comprehensive package aimed at harnessing the skills needed for the future, from submarine engineers to specialist welders, and the cyber warfare specialists defence will need in the years to come. Defence is the engine room of national renewal, and this investment is focused on the future of the people who will be driving that work. This includes investing in the higher education sector to boost places on defence-related courses and establishing a Defence Universities Alliances, which will support and encourage defence sector careers and ethical defence research.

Education Secretary, Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson MP, said:

“The defence sector doesn't just keep the British people safe; it drives growth and unlocks opportunities for young people to learn pioneering skills and pursue a great career.

This investment and our new Defence Technical Excellence Colleges will break down barriers to opportunity for people in every corner of our country, drive economic growth as part of our Plan for Change and secure the UK's place in the world, putting us at the cutting edge of innovation and new technology.”

Universities UK recently launched [a national campaign](#) highlighting the critical role that higher education plays in delivering the UK's Industrial Strategy with case studies. The campaign showcases how universities drive innovation, skills, and regional growth, with particular emphasis on sectors of strategic importance such as defence.

You can [read the full announcement](#).

UK wide ballot paves way for national strike action across university campuses

Over 65,000 members of the University and College Union (UCU) across the UK will be balloted on possible strike action following the Universities and Colleges Employers Association's (UCEA) pay offer of 1.4%. UCU and four other higher education trade unions have rejected the offer, citing concerns that it amounts to a real-terms pay reduction compared to inflation.

The ballot, expected to open in the week commencing Monday 20 October, will cover 138 institutions. Other higher education unions are also considering holding ballots, raising the possibility of coordinated industrial action in the new year if no further progress is made in negotiations.

The UCU highlights comparisons with other sectors, such as the 4% pay award recommended for teachers, and notes that past industrial action has led to significant outcomes, including the reversal of proposed pension cuts.

You [can read the full announcement](#).

Higher Education Commission inquiry to examine how education and training pathways can support delivery of the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan

Cross-party think tank Policy Connect and the [Higher Education Commission](#), in partnership with the [All-Party Parliamentary Health Group](#), have launched a new inquiry on the role of education and training in the NHS, to develop an ambitious policy agenda that improves how post-16 education systems support the recruitment, retention, and development of NHS staff.

The Health Education and Training inquiry will be co-chaired by Kevin McKenna MP, Lord Philip Norton of Louth, and Professor Kathryn Mitchell, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Derby. Experts from further and higher education, the NHS, regulators, and professional bodies are included in the inquiry's steering group, with the University of Derby, ACCA, and iheed sponsoring the inquiry.

Amidst the many pressing and persistent challenges facing the UK's health and social care system, workforce shortages now represent one of the most serious threats to the delivery of high-quality healthcare. Years of constrained funding, growing service complexity, and staff burnout have produced severe staff shortfalls, with just 3.2 doctors per 1,000 people in England, compared to an OECD EU average of 3.9, and 25,632 vacancies within NHS England's registered nursing workforce.

These workforce shortages are closely linked to challenges within the post-16 education system, with mounting operational, financial, and staffing pressures threatening the ability of higher education institutions and further education colleges to meet NHS workforce needs.

Both the Government's Spending Review and NHS 10-Year Plan feature explicit commitments to expanding GP, nursing and AHP education, but there remains a clear

need for practical detail and implementation mechanisms to translate goals into delivery, with coordinated action across education, health and regulatory systems.

The Higher Education Commission's inquiry will produce evidence-based policy recommendations that support education and training pathways to address workforce shortages and equip the health and care system for future challenges – identifying what is needed to deliver sustainable, system-wide change.

It will explore the following important themes:

- Strengthening collaboration between education sectors, the NHS, and other providers.
- Tackling retention challenges.
- Aligning education and training with NHS service needs.
- Resourcing and sustainability.

You [can read the full announcement](#).

Cold spots: Mapping inequality in SHAPE provision in UK higher education - British Academy report

On Tuesday 9 September, the British Academy published a report which highlights that many parts of the UK are becoming subject cold spots - areas with no provision in a subject within a commutable distance. These are often in rural, coastal or historically underserved regions - where many SHAPE subjects are simply unavailable.

Key findings:

More than half of young UK students study locally, with those from disadvantaged backgrounds particularly likely to stay close to home. Yet in many regions, students risk losing access to vital SHAPE subjects. The loss of regional provision reduces student choice and deepens barriers to opportunity, especially for the most disadvantaged.

Parts of the North, South West and East of England, as well as large areas of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, are particularly affected by cold spots in higher education.

Modern Foreign Languages have the largest cold spots in the UK – the number of young UK undergraduates in subjects like French, German and Spanish has nearly

halved since 2011 – with Linguistics, Anthropology and Classics showing similar declines. If current trends continue, subjects like English, History and Drama could follow.

Cold spots are most pronounced in courses with below-average entry tariffs (students' qualifications on entry). Cuts to lower-tariff provision – often offered by teaching-focused institutions serving less mobile, commuter and disadvantaged students – are limiting access to many SHAPE subjects. Given the strong link between socioeconomic background and prior attainment, cuts to lower-tariff provision directly impact opportunities for disadvantaged young people.

The report is part of the British Academy's [Mapping SHAPE project](#), launched in 2024 in response to a growing crisis in UK higher education. The project investigates how subject provision is changing, how regional access has changed over time, and what this means for students, staff and universities' ability to generate economic, social, intellectual and cultural impact. The project also explores possible solutions.

Recommendations:

To secure fair, equitable and robust access to higher education across the UK, the British Academy recommends:

- Higher education regulators should monitor subject provision through an 'at risk' regional subject register and funding for 'at risk' subjects.
- Universities in each UK nation and region should work together to find opportunities for collaboration in teaching, research and services.
- The government should issue clear guidance on how far higher education providers can collaborate without breaching competition law.

You [can read the full report](#).

The University of Greenwich and the University of Kent have announced plans to form a “multi-university group”

The two universities announced plans to form a “multi-university group” – under the working title of the **London and South East University Group**. While the two university brands will continue to exist as trading arms – students will still apply to, study at, and graduate from either Kent or Greenwich – there will be one legal entity, which all staff will become part of.

The intention is for the new structure to be in place **by the beginning of the 2026–27 academic year** – the two institutions are aiming to conclude negotiations and due diligence work by Christmas. The “super university” will have **one unified governing body, academic board and executive team, and one vice chancellor**: Greenwich’s Jane Harrington will be the inaugural appointment.

The new group structure is presented as a “blueprint for other institutions to follow,” one that will become **one of the largest providers of higher education in the UK**, and the biggest recruiter of students in London and the South East. The collaboration is said to “provide a strong financial foundation to weather current and future economic challenges,” with scope for increased research capacity in shared priority areas.

In response to the announcement from the University of Greenwich and the University of Kent of their intention to formally collaborate, **Vivienne Stern MBE, Chief Executive of Universities UK**, said:

“This is an important announcement. Right across the university system in the UK, leaders are thinking and working differently in response to sustained financial pressures. Income has been falling and costs going up. To adapt, we see university leaders thinking about how you can do things differently to be able to grow and thrive in the future.

“This is a perfect example of that creative thinking, building on a 20 year partnership between Kent and Greenwich, which already share a campus in Medway. Universities UK has been working to help universities explore options through our Transformation Taskforce, which recently published a guide on ‘radical collaboration’. Universities are remarkably resilient organisations, partly because they are capable of change and adaptation, and have been throughout history.

“Collaboration and partnership between universities – whether this approach or in other ways – will further strengthen our world-leading sector and ensure it continues to deliver for the public, and for the economy and nation as a whole.”

You can read the full announcements from [University of Greenwich](#) and [University of Kent](#).

Student digital experience insights survey 2024/25 – Jisc report

Jisc’s [student digital experience insights survey 2024/25 \(pdf\)](#), based on over 15,000 higher education students’ responses, found that the majority were happy with the

quality of universities' digital learning provision and with the support they received using university systems.

However, three out of five survey respondents reported issues with connecting by wifi either on or off campus, and nearly two out of five (37%) said they had lacked access to a suitable device at some point during their studies.

Cost of living

48% of students surveyed expressed a preference for online or blended learning over purely on-campus teaching and 36% said that the cost of travel deterred them from attending campus classes. A [report by the Higher Education Policy Institute](#) in June found that 68% undertake paid work during term time to make ends meet. The Jisc survey found that 27% of students reported doing some of their learning and studying while at work. 72% of students said that they used smartphones for learning.

The report highlights the necessity of high-quality and easily accessible digital learning to address the experiences of students struggling with the financial costs of travel and devices, and the time cost of working to fund their studies.

AI and employability

34% of survey respondents said that they used artificial intelligence (AI) tools in their learning, up from 22% in the previous year's survey. With a previous report on [student perceptions of AI report](#) highlighting students' desire to learn about AI to remain competitive in the labour market, today's survey report stresses the need for universities to offer guidance and instruction in digital skills. Only 37% of students said they had been offered opportunities to build digital skills for future employment and only 34% had received an assessment of their digital skills and training needs.

You [can read the full report](#).

Higher education and its benefits at all-time high across OECD countries – Education at a Glance 2025

Demand is growing for advanced skills and higher qualifications across OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) member countries, as developed nations transition to more digital and knowledge-intensive economies. This finding is outlined in the OECD's new *Education at a Glance* report, which this year has a special focus on tertiary education.

Educational attainment has reached an all-time high, with 48% young adults in OECD countries now completing tertiary education – up from just 27% in 2000. These individuals tend to enjoy higher earnings, more stable employment, better health and greater civic participation. This growth is, however, slowing – especially since 2021.

The report notes that financial barriers, lack of preparation, and limited academic and social support often hold back disadvantaged students. It also warns that low completion rates – especially among men – undermine the return on public investment, deepen skills shortages and limit access to opportunities.

While underlining how essential highly qualified teachers are for high-performing education systems, the report notes that in some OECD countries – including the UK – teacher shortages and high turnover make it harder to recruit and retain well-trained educators.

The UK is shown to be one of the most attractive destinations for international students, who make up 23% of the total tertiary student population – an increase of six percentage points within a decade, and well above the OECD average of seven percent.

The UK launch of the report was held in Westminster by Andreas Schleicher, the OECD's Director for Education and Skills, and is hosted by the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) and Cambridge University Press & Assessment.

You [can read the full report](#).

Research at risk: impacts of financial constraints on UK universities -UUK report

A new report from Universities UK, the Campaign for Science and Engineering (CaSE) and the Association of Research Managers and Administrators (ARMA), reveals the risks to research activity across the sector and the implications for national innovation, economic growth and global competitiveness.

Universities throughout the UK are internationally recognised for their research excellence, contributing over £54 billion annually to the economy. However, sustained financial constraints risk eroding this strength. Drawing on member survey data from UUK and ARMA, we show a broad picture of some of the difficult decisions that universities are taking to scale back research and knowledge exchange activity, reduce staff capacity, and limit investment in infrastructure, with many indicating they are considering further cuts in the near future.

The report highlights a concerning trend: universities are withdrawing from certain funding opportunities including charity-funded research vital to life sciences, humanities, and medicine. This narrowing of research scope could undermine the UK's ability to respond to future challenges and maintain its global standing.

However, universities are not standing still in this financially challenging context. They are actively pursuing efficiencies—streamlining processes, collaborating on infrastructure, and engaging with government and funders to reduce bureaucracy. Efficiency alone cannot close the funding gap. To safeguard the UK's research base, the government must work with the sector to protect the real-terms value of quality-related research (QR) funding, and its equivalents in the devolved nations, to create a more sustainable financial framework.

You [can read the full report](#).