



# The All-Party Parliamentary **University Group**

11 – 14 April 2022

## **University APPG weekly update**

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

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## Parliamentary Business

The House of Commons and House of Lords were in recess last week.

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### Forthcoming business

The House of Lords is in recess and will next sit on 25 April 2022.

### Education Committee accountability session with Education Secretary Nadhim Zahawi

On Wednesday 20 April at 9:30am, the Education Committee will be holding an accountability session with Nadhim Zahawi MP, Secretary of State, and Andrew McCully, Director General, Schools, at Department for Education.

You can watch the committee session [here](#).

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## Written Questions

### Access to education for Ukrainian refugees

**Lord Taylor of Warwick:** To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to provide Ukrainian refugees coming to the UK access to (1) education, and (2) language, services. [HL7309]

**Lord Harrington of Watford:** Ukrainians arriving under Homes for Ukraine Scheme will have access to education on the same footing as UK nationals and we are providing local authorities with £10,500 per person to help support them to rebuild their lives and fully integrate into our communities.

Councils are required to provide school places for children of school age and will be paid additional funding to support this. Details of the funding has been published online [here](#).

Ukrainians aged 19 or over will be able to access adult education, including English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). The Welcome Guide for Ukrainian guests provides information on education courses can be found [here](#).

### CAS allocations

**Lord Johnson of Marylebone:** To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the Confirmations of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) allocations function as a de facto cap on the number of international students that can be sponsored for study in the UK.

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** The Home Office continues to welcome international students and we place no limit on their numbers.

In February 2021, the UK Government published an update to the International Education Strategy, recommitting to the ambitions to sustainably increase international students in the UK to 600,000 per year by 2030.

New sponsors can apply for an allocation of Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) of up to 50 percent of their current student body. Subsequent annual requests can be made for up to a 50 percent increase on a CAS allocation for sponsors who have assigned more than 50 CAS in the previous year.

There is no upper limit on the number of CAS which can be allocated across the system, or the number of providers able to gain a sponsor licence. Sponsors are able to submit additional in-year

requests on an exceptional basis and there are no limits on the total number of CAS to be allocated in any given year. These requirements are set out in the published Student Sponsor guidance.

In the case of R (on the application of New London College Limited) (Appellant) v Secretary of State for the Home Department (Respondent) the Supreme Court found the general principle of mandatory requirements for sponsors and actions they must take to maintain a licence were ruled to be lawful and derived from the authority of the Immigration Act 1971, which would include requirements on the numbers of CAS allocated to sponsors.

Data on CAS allocations for specific institutions is not currently published. However, we do produce data at detailed sponsorship dataset which breaks down the numbers of CAS used by types of educational institution.

**Lord Johnson of Marylebone:** To ask Her Majesty's Government what is the legal basis for the imposition of limits on the numbers of Confirmations of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) allocations to individual institutions seeking to admit international students.

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** The Home Office continues to welcome international students and we place no limit on their numbers.

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**Lord Johnson of Marylebone:** To ask Her Majesty's Government how many Confirmations of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) allocations were given to holders of student sponsor licences (1) by institution, and (2) in total, in each of the last five years.

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** The Home Office continues to welcome international students and we place no limit on their numbers.

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**Lord Johnson of Marylebone:** To ask Her Majesty's Government what proportion of Confirmations of Acceptance for Studies issued were unassigned (1) by institution, and (2) in total, in each of the last five years.

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**Lord Johnson of Marylebone:** To ask Her Majesty's Government how many sponsoring institutions have unsuccessfully requested increases to their Confirmations of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) allocations.

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** The Home Office continues to welcome international students and we place no limit on their numbers.

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**Lord Johnson of Marylebone:** To ask Her Majesty's Government what their planned allocation of Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) will be for (1) the next year they can be sought, and (2) each of the next five years.

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** The Home Office continues to welcome international students and we place no limit on their numbers.

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## **University application advantages for the first person in the family to go to university**

**Lord Storey:** To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment, if any, they have made of the advantages afforded to university applicants with at least one family member who has attended university; and whether university application forms should ask whether applicants are first-generation applicants. [HL7367]

**Baroness Barran:** Access to higher education (HE) should be based on a student's attainment and their ability to succeed, rather than background. The Office for Students encourages Higher Education Providers (HEPs) to consider a range of characteristics that might prevent individuals from accessing or succeeding in HE within their access and participation plans. This may include 'first in family'

status, which some research suggests is associated certain forms of socio-economic disadvantage, such as being from a low-income household and being eligible for free school meals.

It should be noted that HEPs are autonomous and independent from government and are therefore responsible for their own admissions decisions. It is important that the admissions system for HE is underpinned by a commitment to fairness, quality of learning and teaching, and places student interests at its core. We will continue to work with UCAS and sector bodies to tackle problems at their root, improving transparency, reducing the use of unconditional offers, and improving the personal statement to underpin fairness for applicants of all backgrounds.

## **Humanitarian sponsorship pathway route for immediate families of Ukrainian students**

**Drew Hendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, with reference to her oral statement of 1 March 2022 on Humanitarian support for Ukrainians, whether the humanitarian sponsorship pathway route will be open to the immediate families of Ukrainian students studying in the UK. [133217]

**Kevin Foster:** This Government has made clear its support for Ukrainians fleeing in fear for their lives. We have brought forward a bespoke humanitarian support package for the people of Ukraine, having listened carefully to the Ukrainian Government.

The bespoke 'Homes for Ukraine ' scheme allows individuals, charities, community groups and businesses in the UK to bring Ukrainians to safety. This includes those individuals with no family ties to the UK.

Ukrainian students in the UK will be able to register their interest to become a sponsor of a named individual to come to the UK, as long as they meet the sponsorship eligibility criteria.

All sponsors must be over the age of 18 and be able to provide accommodation for at least 6 months. For those who are not a British citizen, they must have leave to remain in the UK for at least 6 months so they have the ability to provide at least 6 months' accommodation for those who they sponsor.

There will be no limit on the number of arrivals, and those who come to the UK on the scheme will have permission to live and work here for up to 3 years. They will also have access to healthcare, benefits, employment support and education.

For further information on the Homes for Ukraine Scheme can be found [here](#).

## **Change of funding spent on skills**

**Bridget Phillipson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the change in the level of funding spent on skills, across all sectors of the economy, since 2010. [149239]

**Alex Burghart:** Spend by the Department for Education (and previously the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills) on skills is reported through publication of the Annual Report and Accounts. These are available for each financial year since 2010/11.

The Department for Education (DfE) reports are available [here](#).

The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) reports are available [here](#).

Responsibility for higher and further education policy, apprenticeships and skills moved from BIS to DfE in 2016.

In the 2021 Spending Review, the government set out its plan to invest £3.8 billion more in skills over the Parliament as a whole, equivalent to a cash increase of 42% compared to the 2019/20 financial year. This will ensure people can access high-quality training and education that leads to good jobs, addresses skills gaps, boosts productivity, and supports levelling up. This will support the sector to reform and deliver the technical, skilled education employers want and our economy needs.

## **Chevening scholars**

**David Lammy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, how many times her Department has been contacted by Chevening scholars requesting her Department's assistance to leave Afghanistan, since 15 August 2021. [148030]

**Vicky Ford:** The FCDO contacted all 2021 Afghan Chevening scholars in August to offer them evacuation to the UK under Operation Pitting. Officials across Government worked around the clock to enable the vast majority of scholars and their families to travel to the UK on military evacuation flights. Under the third referral pathway of the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS), the Government will offer ACRS places to eligible at risk Chevening alumni.

**David Lammy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for the Home Department regarding providing refuge to Chevening scholars in Afghanistan.[148031]

**Vicky Ford:** The FCDO contacted all 2021 Afghan Chevening scholars in August to offer them evacuation to the UK under Operation Pitting. Officials across Government worked around the clock to enable the vast majority of scholars and their families to travel to the UK on military evacuation flights. Under the third referral pathway of the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS), the Government will offer ACRS places to eligible at risk Chevening alumni.

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## **Sector News**

### **Office for Students letter on access and participation plans**

On Tuesday 12 April, the Director of Fair Access and Participation at the Office for Students wrote to all providers with an access and participation plan to ask them to request variations to their access and participation plans for the 2023-24 academic year. The letter asks that the variations address the new priorities for access and participation.

You can read the letter [here](#).

### **UK Shared Prosperity Fund Allocations**

On Wednesday 13 April, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities announced the allocations of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) for each UK nation, amounting to £2.6 billion of funding in total between 2022 and 2025.

The department also published the 'Interventions list for England', including the below interventions on research and innovation:

- E19: Increasing investment in research and development at the local level. Investment to support the diffusion of innovation knowledge and activities. Support the commercialisation of ideas,



encouraging collaboration and accelerating the path to market so that more ideas translate into industrial and commercial practices.

- E20: Research and development grants supporting the development of innovative products and services.
- E21: Funding for the development and support of appropriate innovation infrastructure at the local level.
- E22: Investing in enterprise infrastructure and employment/innovation site development projects. This can help to unlock site development projects which will support growth in places.
- E23: Strengthening local entrepreneurial ecosystems, and supporting businesses at all stages of their development to start, sustain, grow and innovate, including through local networks.
- E24: Funding for new and improvements to existing training hubs, business support offers, 'incubators' and 'accelerators' for local enterprise (including social enterprise) which can support entrepreneurs and start-ups through the early stages of development and growth by offering a combination of services including account management, advice, resources, training, coaching, mentorship and access to workspace.

You can find the announcement [here](#) and the intervention guidance [here](#).

## **Department of Health and Social Care consultation on mental health**

On Thursday 14 April, the Department for Health and Social Care launched a new consultation on the government's plan on mental health and wellbeing for England. The discussion paper and call for evidence seek views on what the government can do to improve everyone's mental health and wellbeing.

The government has committed to develop a new cross-government, 10-year plan for mental health and wellbeing for England. The discussion paper is asking:

- how can we all promote positive mental wellbeing? (chapter 1)
- how can we all prevent the onset of mental ill-health? (chapter 2)
- how can we all intervene earlier when people need support with their mental health? (chapter 3)
- how can we improve the quality and effectiveness of treatment for mental health conditions? (chapter 4)
- how can we all support people living with mental health conditions to live well? (chapter 5)
- how can we all improve support for people in crisis? (chapter 6)

The consultation notes that a key challenge includes gaps in the level and quality of early mental health support and signposting provided in settings where the right staff training and interventions can make a critical difference. This includes schools and colleges, universities, housing associations, social care, NHS physical health services, youth centres, sports clubs, workplaces and job centres.

You can find out more [here](#).