



All-Party Parliamentary University Group

Weekly update

12 – 16 May 2025

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

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Parliamentary business

Immigration System – Ministerial Statement

On Monday 12 May, the Home Secretary, Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP, made a ministerial statement on the Immigration White Paper, during which several Members raised concerns about the impact of government policy on universities and the higher education sector.

Ben Lake MP (Plaid Cymru) drew attention to the financial pressures facing UK universities. He cited the Migration Advisory Committee’s recent conclusion that the graduate visa route should be retained, warning that “closure or additional restrictions could put many universities at financial risk.” He asked the Home Secretary for her assessment of the implications these changes would have on institutional sustainability.

Rachael Maskell MP (Labour) highlighted the importance of international students to local economies, stating that higher education is the second-largest export from her constituency. She urged the Home Secretary to consult properly with the higher education sector before proceeding with reforms that could undermine both international recruitment and domestic opportunities.

Stephen Gethins MP (Scottish National Party) described the UK’s higher education sector as world leading, owing to its ability to attract top global talent. He raised the case of the University of Dundee, which he said had incurred millions of pounds in losses due to recent Home Office policies. He invited the Home Secretary to visit the university and see the consequences of current immigration rules first-hand.

You can [read a transcript](#) and [watch the session](#).

Autism Act 2009 Committee – oral evidence

On Monday 12 May, the House of Lords Autism Act 2009 Committee held an oral evidence session examining the effectiveness of the government’s current autism strategy. The Committee heard from:

- Tania Tirraoro (Founder and Co-Director at Special Needs Jungle)
- Alice Willans (Chair of Youth Council at Ambitious About Autism)
- Anita Harrington (parent of an autistic university student)

Opening the discussion, Anita Harrington described her son’s journey through the education system, noting that he was diagnosed with autism at age 15 and received

very little formal support in the years that followed. Despite this, he progressed to university, but she emphasised that the lack of an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) had a lasting impact on the assistance he received both during and after the transition to higher education.

Alice Willans echoed these concerns, warning that many autistic young people receive support in school but face a “cliff edge” once they enter university. She described the university application process as particularly difficult for students with communication differences and said the system often assumes a level of independence that does not reflect the reality for many neurodivergent students.

Tania Tirraoro agreed that autistic students are often left without adequate support in higher education settings. She called for improved transitions planning from school to university and highlighted the need for specialist input and consistency across local authorities. She also stressed that universities require better funding and training to deliver appropriate support.

Peers raised concerns about the fragmentation of post-18 support and asked witnesses how transitions could be better managed. Witnesses called for clear, nationally recognised standards for autism support in universities and urged greater involvement of young autistic people in the design of services.

You can [read more](#) and [watch the session](#).

Encouraging scientists from around the world to do their research and work in the UK – HoL oral question

On Tuesday 13 May, the House of Lords held an oral question on ‘Encouraging scientists from around the world to do their research and work in the United Kingdom. The debate was tabled by Viscount Stansgate (Labour).

Opening the debate, Viscount Stansgate argued that current political developments overseas - particularly in the United States - where universities and scientific research are under pressure present a rare opportunity for the UK to strengthen its own higher education and research. He urged the government to go beyond existing policy and develop a comprehensive initiative to attract not only individual researchers, but entire research teams to UK universities. Such an initiative, he argued, could yield a "brain gain" of immense value to the nation's scientific output, academic prestige, and long-term economic growth.

Responding on behalf of the government, Lord Vallance of Balham (Labour), Minister for Science, Research, and Innovation, confirmed that the UK continues to be an attractive destination for international academics, citing that around 37% of staff at the UK's top research and teaching universities are non-UK nationals. He also noted that one-third of UK Nobel laureates are either first- or second-generation immigrants, underlining the longstanding contribution of overseas scientists to British academia. The Minister highlighted the government's existing funding commitments, including £770 million for talent programmes via UKRI in 2025–26, with £170 million allocated specifically to future leader fellowships aimed at nurturing scientific excellence.

The debate reflected cross-party support for strengthening the UK's academic offer, though concerns were raised about the disconnect between the government's stated ambitions and the practical challenges facing universities.

Lord Clement-Jones, Liberal Democrat spokesperson for Science, Innovation, and Technology, warned that rising visa costs, the immigration skills charge, and stagnating real-terms core research funding are undermining the UK's ability to attract global scientific talent. He called on the government to produce a long-term strategic plan that links increased investment with improved recruitment and cautioned against a mixed policy message that both encourages global talent while simultaneously making it more difficult and expensive for researchers to relocate.

In response, Lord Vallance assured peers that steps were being taken to address practical barriers. He also reaffirmed that the Immigration White Paper includes specific measures to streamline and accelerate high-skill routes, including the Global Talent Visa, which is intended to make it easier for universities and research institutions to attract top-tier international candidates.

Peers also raised concerns about the broader talent pipeline and the role of higher education in fostering future scientific leaders. Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick (Labour) highlighted the significance of the graduate visa route, especially for institutions like Queen's University Belfast, which benefit from a steady influx of researchers and students from Southeast Asia. She urged the government to ensure this route remains viable and not be weakened through future immigration reforms.

In response, Lord Vallance defended the graduate route as a vital mechanism but noted that recent changes had reduced the post-study work period from 24 months to 18 months, aiming to ensure that graduates enter high-skilled employment quickly rather than remain in lower-skilled roles.

Lord Tyrie (Non-affiliated) pressed the Minister for clarity on the timeline for publishing the proposed immigration and research talent framework, and questioned whether recent government announcements on broader immigration restrictions

might undermine these efforts. Lord Vallance stated that announcements would follow shortly and reiterated that the focus would remain on attracting the “brightest and best,” regardless of origin.

Lord Turnberg (Labour) and Lord Mair (Crossbench) both emphasised the urgency of action. Lord Mair warned that other countries were acting quickly to fill the void left by US science policy shifts, and said that unless the UK acts decisively, it risks falling behind. Lord Vallance responded by saying that UK universities had already received interest from international researchers and that the government was actively considering further mechanisms to attract both individuals and research groups.

Closing the discussion, Viscount Camrose, Shadow Minister for Science, Innovation, and Technology asked how the government intends to monitor the UK’s overall attractiveness to researchers and adapt policy as needed. Lord Vallance shared recent data showing that 17% of the UK’s R&D workforce are non-UK nationals and confirmed that a new Labour Market Evidence Group, comprising government departments and advisory councils, is being established to assess workforce needs and inform future policy.

You can [watch the session](#) and [read a transcript](#).

Industrial Strategy – Business and Trade Committee oral evidence

On Tuesday 13 May, the House of Commons Business and Trade Committee heard oral evidence as part of their ongoing ‘Industrial Strategy’ inquiry.

During the session, Baroness Smith of Malvern Minister for Skills and Minister for Women and Equalities, emphasised the central role of the UK’s post-16 education system in closing skills gaps and driving productivity. She stated that up to “a third of productivity growth” between 2002 and 2019 could be attributed to improvements in skills. In response to questions on unfilled skills shortage vacancies, she said that addressing these gaps would contribute significantly to national growth, though she cautioned that precise economic gains were difficult to quantify.

She stressed the importance of a more targeted approach to skills delivery, noting that the government was beginning to develop greater granularity in identifying where skills provision is most needed. She explained that this would involve considering “the system of provision—whether that is the apprenticeship levy, what you are providing through further education or the focus in higher education—and,

therefore, where you are expecting the system to focus, on top of the universal provision that it needs to have”.

Baroness Smith also addressed forthcoming reforms in the Immigration White Paper, confirming that the government aims to better align international recruitment with the domestic skills system. She stated that ministers are examining how conditionality might be introduced, whereby employers drawing on migrant labour are incentivised to invest more in training the UK-based workforce.

You can read [the full transcript](#) and [watch the session](#).

Science Innovation & Technology – HoC oral questions

On Wednesday 14 May from 11:30am, the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation, and Technology, Rt Hon Peter Kyle MP, and his ministerial colleagues answered oral questions in the House of Commons.

Shadow Secretary of State Alan Mak MP criticised the government’s decision to cancel the UK’s first next-generation supercomputer at the University of Edinburgh. He questioned the impact this would have on Britain’s technological capacity and the higher education sector’s ability to remain competitive in global research and development.

In his reply, the Secretary of State said the government would pursue a compute strategy that was fit for purpose and would be ‘fully funded and fully delivered’.

You can [watch the session](#) and [read a transcript](#).

Social Mobility Policy Committee session - HoL

On Thursday 15 May, the House of Lords Social Mobility Policy Committee held an evidence session on social mobility policy. The Committee heard from:

- Lord Willetts, President of the Resolution Foundation
- Justine Greening, Founder and Chair of The Purpose Coalition
- Nik Miller, CEO at Bridge Group

Opening the discussion, Lord Willetts) noted that just 20% of children from the most disadvantaged families progressed to university, compared with 60% of those from the most advantaged backgrounds. He emphasised that for any given level of degree

attainment, graduates from disadvantaged backgrounds tended to do less well in the labour market than their better-off peers. He argued that university access funding should be used not only to widen participation in higher education but also to support progression into employment.

Justine Greening agreed that further action was needed to ensure that talent from across socio-economic groups flowed into opportunity. She suggested that part of the solution lies with employers, whose access plans must work in parallel with university efforts. She also stated that Russell Group universities in particular had more to do in identifying and nurturing working-class talent.

Nik Miller acknowledged that while universities were making good progress on widening access, the gap in graduate outcomes was largely attributable to employer behaviours. He noted that philanthropic giving often prioritised institutions that were less socio-economically diverse. All three witnesses agreed that reintroducing student number controls would be detrimental to social mobility.

On the use of data, Lord Willetts called for greater use of Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) data and student loans data—particularly on parental income—to better understand and track outcomes for disadvantaged students. He said universities were already required to collect much of this information and proposed that it be brought together into a central data library.

Justine Greening referred to four key socio-economic questions developed by government - relating to parental occupation, free school meal eligibility, school type, and first-generation university attendance - and described them as useful, though imperfect, measures of background.

The Committee also examined the recent rise in young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs). Lord Willetts expressed concern that this increase was occurring despite more young people entering higher education and fewer becoming teenage parents. He questioned who was responsible for enforcing participation requirements up to age 18.

On regional disparities, Lord Willetts proposed that establishing universities in areas with weak social mobility could help address geographic inequalities. He cited Coventry and Worcester as examples of towns where new universities had contributed to local opportunity. He also argued that improving public transport links to cities such as Birmingham and Manchester would help spread access to economic and educational advancement.

In conclusion, Lord Willetts called for renewed focus on improving the number of disadvantaged students progressing to higher education, supported by the reintroduction of a means-tested maintenance grant. All three witnesses stressed

that university access must be linked more closely to employment outcomes in future social mobility policy.

You can [watch the session](#).

Business Questions: Higher education immigration policy

On Thursday 15 May, Business Questions took place in the House of Commons.

Rt Hon Jesse Norman MP, Shadow Leader of the House of Commons, celebrated the graduation of the first students from the new Model Institute for Technology and Engineering. He highlighted the success of the university in being agile, accountable, and promoting a sense of belonging and community to its students. The Shadow Leader of the House proceeded to explain that there were 50 small cities and large towns that lacked higher education and called on the government to seize this opportunity.

In her response, the Leader of the House of Commons, Rt Hon Lucy Powell MP, said the university ‘sound[ed] like an important and good innovation to provide technical education and engineering pathways.’ She said that ‘when higher education joins much more closely with the place of work and the skills that are needed for the jobs of the future, that is when we get much more bang for our buck, and our young people have the opportunities in life that they need.’

Christine Jardine MP (Liberal Democrat) noted that the wellbeing of Edinburgh’s four universities was vital to the economy and to the likelihoods of constituents. She shared warnings from Universities Scotland that the proposed levy could cost universities in Scotland £85 million a year. She asked whether the Leader of the House could arrange a meeting with the relevant Minister to consider how this issue could be addressed and provide reassurances to the higher education sector.

In her reply, the Leader of the House said that international students play an important role in the UK and that the Minister would follow-up.

Warinder Juss MP (Labour) raised the prospect of establishing a statutory duty of care on higher education providers towards their students. She asked if the Leader of the House would meet with her and the director of student life and designated safeguarding lead at the University of Wolverhampton to discuss and clarify what duties and responsibilities universities have towards their students’ health and wellbeing.

In her reply, the Leader of the House described the statistics as shocking and warned that they were ‘not just numbers but individual tragedies.’ She said that she would ensure the relevant Minister at the Department for Education was aware of these concerns.

You can [read a transcript](#) and [watch the session](#).

Immigration System - HoL Ministerial Statement

On Thursday 15 May, Lord Hanson of Flint, Minister of State at the Home Office, made a Ministerial Statement on the Immigration White Paper, following the statement made in the House of Commons. Many peers raised the implications of proposed immigration reforms for the UK’s higher education sector.

Baroness Hamwee (Liberal Democrat) reflected on the long-standing benefits of welcoming international students to the UK, citing their contribution to the country’s “soft power”. While welcoming some recognition of this in the Government’s Statement, she criticised the White Paper for failing to fully reflect these values. She also challenged the decision to reduce post-study work rights for international graduates, warning that such changes were “perverse and damaging” and risked making the UK less attractive to global talent.

Lord Hanson of Flint responded by affirming the Government’s commitment to maintaining the UK’s appeal to international students, stating: We value very much the contribution of students and universities. We are not stopping students coming to the country... But we are simply putting in place an 18-month period after graduation.”

He also noted that many international students remain in the UK beyond graduation without transitioning into graduate-level roles. The Government, he said, would maintain graduate visa pathways but with stricter conditions to ensure alignment with the country’s skills strategy.

Baroness May of Maidenhead (Conservative) urged the Government to prevent abuse of the visa system, particularly in the student route, and called for more discretion to be given to immigration officers rather than relying solely on a points-based approach. In response, Lord Hanson confirmed that while the points-based system would remain central, reforms would introduce “more rigour” into student visa compliance.

Lord Dubs (Labour) reiterated concerns over the treatment of international students within the net migration figures, suggesting that including them “distorted” public

understanding. He welcomed the Government's emphasis on English language as a tool for integration but criticised inflammatory rhetoric in public discourse that may alienate migrants, including students.

Lord Boateng (Labour) highlighted the creative industries' reliance on a globally diverse workforce and asked for reassurances that visa qualifications would reflect the non-academic nature of many specialist roles. Lord Hanson acknowledged the issue and committed to further consultation on how creative and educational sectors would be supported under the new system.

The debate made clear that while peers broadly recognised the need for immigration reform, there was cross-party concern that changes to the graduate visa system and international student routes could undermine the UK's global competitiveness in higher education. Several members stressed the importance of consultation with the sector to prevent unintended consequences for universities and local economies.

You can [read a transcript](#) and [watch the session](#).

Forthcoming business

Financing and Scaling UK Science and Technology: Innovation, Investment, Industry - Science and Technology Committee oral evidence

On Tuesday 20 May, the Science and Technology Committee will hold an oral evidence session as part of its inquiry into "Financing and Scaling UK Science and Technology: Innovation, Investment, Industry."

You can [read more](#) and [watch the session](#).

Written questions and statements

Education: China

Jim Shannon (Democratic Unionist Party): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of continuing to pursue partnerships with Chinese Defence Universities. [UIN 48907]

Janet Daby (Labour): The UK welcomes international partnerships, including with China, which make a positive impact on the UK's higher education (HE) sector, our economy and society as a whole. However, we will always protect our national security interests, human rights and values.

This government will take a consistent, long term and strategic approach to managing the UK's relations with China, rooted in UK and global interests. We will co-operate where we can, compete where we need to and challenge where we must. The department is contributing towards the government's audit of the UK's relationship with China as a bilateral and global actor, to improve our ability to understand and respond to the challenges and opportunities China poses.

Any international arrangements made by registered HE providers in England must be within the law and must comply with the registration conditions set by the Office for Students, including a commitment to their public interest governance principles. To support universities to maximise the opportunities of international collaboration whilst managing any risks, the government offers practical advice through the National Protective Security Authority, the National Cyber Security Centre and the Research Collaboration and Advice Team. The department works alongside these partners and engages directly with the sector to increase their understanding of any risks and their ability to respond to them.

[Source](#)

Medicine: Postgraduate Education

Joe Robertson (Conservative): To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his Department's postgraduate training review will consider the level of access to training opportunities available to international medical graduates. [UIN 49223]

Karin Smyth: We are committed to training the staff we need to ensure that patients are cared for by the right professional, when and where they need it.

To reform the National Health Service and make it fit for the future, we have launched a 10-Year Health Plan as part of the Government's five long-term missions. Ensuring we have the right people, in the right places, with the right skills will be central to this vision. We will publish a refreshed workforce plan to deliver the transformed health service we will build over the next decade, and treat patients on time again.

We will ensure that the number of medical specialty training places meets the demands of the NHS in the future. NHS England will work with stakeholders to ensure that any growth is sustainable and focused in the service areas where the need is greatest.

The Medical Training Review is overseen by NHS England's National Medical Director and the Chief Medical Officer. The review will hear about best practice, listen to concerns, including issues around training pathways and the capacity, quality, and inclusivity of training, and will explore ideas and thoughts about how postgraduate medical training could evolve for the future. An engagement exercise will run through to June this year, with findings to be reported in the summer.

Grouped Questions: 49222

[Source](#)

Lifelong Learning: North of England

Luke Myer (Labour): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking with local businesses to ensure that (a) schools and (b) colleges in the north of England have adequate resources to provide effective lifelong learning opportunities.[UIN 49590]

Janet Daby: This government recognises the value of lifelong learning and creating opportunities for individuals across their working lives. That is why the department has committed to introducing the Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE), a transformation to the existing higher education student finance system. The LLE will launch in the 2026/27 academic year for learners studying courses starting on or after 1 January 2027.

Under the LLE, new learners will be able to access a full entitlement equal to four years of full-time tuition. This is currently equal to £38,140 based on the 2025/26 academic year fee rates.

Learners will be able to use this new entitlement more flexibly than ever before to fund individual modules as well as full courses at levels 4 to 6, regardless of whether they are provided in colleges, universities or independent providers.

Working closely with local and national employers to fully understand their needs is a key part of the successful delivery of the department's ambition for the LLE. This is demonstrated through our existing piloting activity, the Modular acceleration programme, which is a two-year programme designed to accelerate the supply and delivery of individual modules of Higher Technical Qualifications. Through this programme, successful providers in the North West and Yorkshire and the Humber, seven colleges in the combined regions in this case, received funding to enable demand raising which included engagement with local employers.

Schools will also play a key part in the successful delivery of the LLE by communicating key messages about the programme to leaders, career-guidance practitioners, learners and their parents. This will be key in ensuring learners are well informed about the new flexibilities offered by the LLE.

In addition, local skills improvement plans, led by a designated employer representative body, are bringing together employers and providers across England to set out a clear articulation of employers' skills needs and the priority changes required in the local area.

Source

Universities: Innovation

Harpreet Uppal (Labour): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking with (a) the University of Huddersfield and (b) other local universities to help promote (i) innovation and (ii) skills development in that region.[UIN 49240]

Janet Daby: Skills development is crucial for economic growth and breaking down the barriers to opportunity.

The government is developing a Post-16 Education and Skills Strategy which will set out how the skills system will work to deliver on our Plan for Change, moving towards a more responsive and flexible education system that can adapt to the evolving demands of the economy. This will help ensure that students and workers have access to the training and education they need to thrive in work and life.

Through Skills England, the department also oversees local skills improvement plans which provide an ongoing mechanism through which local employers, strategic

authorities, further education and higher education providers and other stakeholders can come together locally to identify and resolve skills needs and issues.

Source

Medicine: Research

Peter Prinsley (Labour): To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of abolishing NHS England on the number of research partnerships with universities in (a) public health, (b) clinical trials, (c) innovation and (d) other areas. [UIN 48689]

Ashley Dalton: Ministers and senior Department officials will work with the new executive team at the top of NHS England, led by Sir Jim Mackey, to lead the formation of a new joint centre. As we work to bring the two organisations together, we will ensure that we continue to evaluate impacts of all kinds.

We continue to work collaboratively across both organisations to put in place plans to ensure continuity of services.

The National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), funded by the Department, is the nation's largest funder of clinical, public health, and social care research, and is committed to working in partnership with the National Health Service, universities, local government, other research funders, patients, and the public to improve the health and wealth of the nation through research. The Department's investment in NIHR research partnerships will not be impacted by the formation of a new joint centre.

Source.

Higher Education: Artificial Intelligence

Damian Hinds (Conservative): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of trends in the level of undergraduates using generative artificial intelligence for completing assignments. [UIN 48394]

Stephen Morgan: Universities are independent and autonomous bodies responsible for decisions including course content and teaching and assessment. As such, they are responsible for designing and implementing their own policies and approaches to the use of artificial intelligence (AI).

Universities and colleges rightly have policies in place to identify and respond to cheating in assessment. The consequences for students can be severe, including removal from their course. With the support of the Academic Integrity Advisory Group, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education has developed an Academic Integrity Charter, which sets out key guiding principles to support academic integrity policy development and practice in UK higher education. Over 200 institutions have pledged to implement the Charter's principles and commitments, working with staff and students to promote academic integrity and take action against academic misconduct.

The sector is developing guidelines for ethical and responsible use of generative AI for staff and students. In July 2023 the Russell Group published a set of principles, developed in partnership with educational experts, recognising the risks of AI and committing its members to helping staff and students become leaders in an increasingly AI-enabled world.

[Source](#)

Students: Artificial Intelligence

Andrew Cooper (Labour): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the (a) level of use of AI by students to complete assessments in (i) secondary, (ii) further and (iii) higher education and (b) the potential impact of use on the validity of academic qualifications. [UIN 49602]

Stephen Morgan: The department policy paper on generative artificial intelligence (AI) in education sets out some of the opportunities and risks education establishments should be aware of when considering generative AI technologies, including use of AI in assessments. The policy paper can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/generative-artificial-intelligence-in-education/generative-artificial-intelligence-ai-in-education>.

The department is working to ensure teachers are equipped and supported to promote safe and appropriate use of AI.

Schools, colleges and awarding organisations need to continue taking reasonable steps, where applicable, to prevent malpractice involving the use of generative AI. Teachers know their pupils best and are experienced in identifying their individual pupils' work.

A new departmental group will advise on digital, AI and technology to prepare children and young people for an AI and tech-enabled world, as well as promoting the

use of AI and Edtech for better teaching and learning. Expert and evidence-informed recommendations will be produced.

The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) has published guidance on AI use in assessments. This guidance provides teachers and exam centres with information to help them prevent and identify potential malpractice involving the misuse of AI. The JCQ guidance can be found here: <https://www.jcq.org.uk/exams-office/malpractice/artificial-intelligence/>.

Ofsted and Ofqual both published policy papers in April 2024 outlining their approach to AI and Ofsted are currently updating their AI Strategy. The Office for Students will be including actions relating to AI in its upcoming 2025 to 2028 Strategy.

Source

Teachers: Mental Health

Victoria Collins (Liberal Democrats): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to help improve the mental health of (a) teachers and (b) support staff. [UIN 44781]

Catherine McKinnell: High-quality teaching is the biggest in-school factor that makes a difference to a child's education. Being taught by a good teacher can add almost half a GCSE grade per subject to a given pupil's results. That is why, as well as working to recruit additional teachers, the department is working hard to retain our experienced teachers.

The department is working in partnership with the sector and mental health experts to improve staff mental health and wellbeing. Steps taken include continued promotion of the education staff wellbeing charter, which sets out shared commitments to protect and promote the wellbeing of staff in schools and colleges. More than 4,000 schools and colleges have signed up to the charter so far, which can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/education-staff-wellbeing-charter>.

The department has also funded mental health and wellbeing support for school and college leaders, which includes professional supervision and counselling. More than 2,600 leaders have benefitted from this support so far. This support can be accessed at: <https://www.educationsupport.org.uk/get-help/help-for-your-staff/wellbeing-services/professional-supervision/>.

Furthermore, a range of resources have been made available to help schools prioritise staff wellbeing. For example, the department's 'Improve workload and wellbeing for school staff' service, developed alongside school leaders, provides tools

to support schools to identify opportunities to cut excessive workload and improve staff wellbeing. This service can be accessed at: <https://improve-workload-and-wellbeing-for-school-staff.education.gov.uk/>.

Finally, guidance is available to support school leaders and staff to help manage behaviour in schools, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/behaviour-in-schools--2>.

Source

T-levels: Engineering

Daisy Cooper (Liberal Democrats): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has had discussions with EngineeringUK on supporting engineering companies in providing T Level placements for engineering students in further education. [UIN 48530]

Janet Daby: The department works closely with a range of colleges, schools, employers and their representative bodies to ensure the availability and quality of T Level industry placements across the country. For the engineering and manufacturing sector this includes the Gatsby Charitable Foundation's Engineering and Manufacturing working group, made up of organisations including EngineeringUK, Eginuity (and the National Manufacturing Skills Task Force), Make UK and the Royal Academy of Engineering. The group share resources, case studies and undertake employer awareness-raising campaigns to support the delivery of industry placements.

The department also actively engages stakeholders via our T Level Ambassador Network which advocates for T Levels and plays a key role in bringing industry and education together across a range of sectors. The network has expanded to over 900 members, including large businesses, small and medium enterprises, colleges and schools, universities and students. Over 120 representatives from the engineering and manufacturing sector are part of this network.

Source

Department for Education: Apprentices

Jo White (Labour): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department has set a minimum quality threshold under the apprenticeship accountability framework for training providers to continue offering new starts on a standard in the apprenticeship programme in England for the academic year 2025-

26; and when she plans to communicate information about the required threshold to providers. [UIN 48651]

Janet Daby: The Apprenticeship Accountability Framework (AAF) is the department's main tool for improving apprenticeship quality. The AAF evaluates Qualification Achievement Rates alongside nine other quality indicators, such as Ofsted outcomes, withdrawal rates and feedback from apprentices and employers, using updated data throughout the year.

The AAF sets minimum thresholds for each quality indicator, reflecting the department's baseline expectations for apprenticeship quality. If a provider's performance falls below these thresholds, it triggers a management conversation between the department and the provider, rather than an automatic cessation of starts on a standard.

The quality indicators and their minimum thresholds are detailed in the Apprenticeship Accountability Framework and Specification, which is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-training-provider-accountability-framework/apprenticeship-training-provider-accountability-framework-and-specification--2#accountability-policy-for-apprenticeship-training-providers>. The department will continually review these indicators and thresholds, using the latest available data from the current and previous academic years, while considering sector consultation and feedback to ensure they are appropriately set.

Any changes to the AAF, including updates to quality indicators and their minimum thresholds, will be communicated to the sector.

Source

Higher Education: Finance

Perran Moon (Labour): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of ringfencing funding for small and specialist Higher Education Institutions. [UIN 47994]

Janet Daby: Small and specialist higher education (HE) institutions provide a highly valuable role in nurturing talent and contributing to the UK's academic, cultural and economic landscape.

The Office for Students (OfS) provides targeted funding to twenty small and specialist providers that they assessed as world leading. This is delivered through the Strategic Priorities Grant (SPG), which is funding that the government provides on an annual basis to support teaching and students in HE, including expensive-to-deliver subjects,

such as science and engineering, and for students at risk of discontinuing their studies.

For this 2024/25 academic year, funding from the SPG for these small and specialist providers was maintained at £58 million. Funding for the 2025/26 academic year will be announced by the OfS, following government guidance, later this year.

[Source](#)

Apprentices: Small Businesses

Wendy Morton (Conservative): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of introducing measures in connection with the Growth and Skills Levy to protect funding for (a) SMEs and (b) young people. [UIN 49739]

Janet Daby: This government has committed to widening the apprenticeships offer into a growth and skills offer, which will offer greater flexibility to employers and learners and align with the industrial strategy.

As a first step, this will include shorter duration apprenticeships and new foundation apprenticeships for young people. These will help more people learn high-quality skills at work, give more young people a foot in the door at the start of their working lives, and support the pipeline of new talent that employers will need to drive economic growth.

Construction will be one of the key sectors that will benefit from foundation apprenticeships from August 2025, backed by an additional £40 million, and shorter duration apprenticeships will also be possible from August 2025.

The government recognises the importance of ensuring the growth and skills offer supports small and medium-sized employers (SMEs) to access apprenticeships. Development of the offer will be informed by the results of Skills England's analysis and engagement, including on where flexibilities will be most helpful for employers, including SMEs.

[Source](#)

Higher Education: Entry Clearances

Mary Kelly Foy (Labour): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of visa restrictions on revenue streams in the Higher Education sector. [UIN 47316]

Janet Daby: There are many factors that influence international students when they choose to study abroad. These include the range and quality of available courses, the visa rules that apply in countries they are considering, and the appeal of living and studying in those countries.

Several changes were made to the immigration system in 2024, restricting international students from bringing family members with them to the UK unless they are studying a PhD, doctorate or research-based higher degree. These restrictions will be continued, as confirmed by my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for the Home Department in early February, in line with the government's commitment to manage migration carefully. The Home Office has also published a full impact assessment of changes made to student and work visas in 2024, alongside their introduction.

Data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency shows that international students contributed £12.1 billion in tuition fees to UK higher education (HE) providers in the 2022/23 academic year.

This government has made clear its approach to international students. We welcome international students who enrich our university campuses, forge lifelong friendships with our domestic students and become global ambassadors for the UK.

Source

Students: Neurodiversity

The Rt Hon. the Lord Patten (Conservative): To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Smith of Malvern on 14 April (HL6368), what estimate they have made of the number of university students who self-identify as neurodivergent. [HL6802]

The Rt Hon. the Baroness Smith of Malvern: There is no set category for 'neurodivergence', so included in this figure are higher education (HE) student enrolments flagged as 'Learning difference such as dyslexia, dyspraxia or AD(H)D' and 'Social/communication conditions such as a speech and language impairment or an autistic spectrum condition'.

Across all levels and modes of study and all domiciles, 245,810 HE student enrolments self-assessed in this way for the 2023/24 academic year across all UK HE providers.

Source

Skills England: Membership

The Rt Hon. the Lord Blunkett (Labour): To ask His Majesty's Government when they expect to announce the full membership of the board of Skills England. [HL6776]

The Rt Hon. the Baroness Smith of Malvern: The government announced the executive and non-executive leadership team of Skills England on 11 February. The chair of the board is Phil Smith, former chief executive officer (CEO) of Cisco UK and Ireland, and the vice chair is Sir David Bell, vice chancellor of the University of Sunderland. Sarah Maclean and Tessa Griffiths jointly serve as CEOs of Skills England, and Gemma Marsh is deputy CEO.

The government has also been recruiting additional non-executive board members for Skills England. The department received a large number of high-calibre applicants, who have undergone a rigorous selection process to ensure a diverse Board with the necessary skills and experience to support and challenge Skills England in its vital work. The full membership of the Board will be announced in due course.

Source

Higher Education: Research

The Baroness Alexander of Clevedon FRSE (Labour): To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to facilitate US-based academics and researchers who may wish to consider relocating to the UK's higher education sector. [HL6865]

The Lord Vallance of Balham KCB: The government recognises and values the US as a key partner in R&D and look forward to continuing our collaboration on shared priorities to drive economic growth and technological advancement. Both the UK and US are committed to facilitating the exchange of talent and students to enhance R&D capabilities.

The government is committed to ensuring the UK is the top destination for globally mobile research talent based anywhere in the world. The UK boasts a world-leading science base, supported by top universities and research institutions, and has an

ambitious funding offer through UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and the National Academies, which offer prestigious fellowships and professorships.

Source

EDM: Universities and international students (1261)

That this House is deeply proud of the UK's place as a world-leader in research and teaching in universities and other Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), home to many of the world's leading universities; notes with concern the deep financial issues facing many universities and HEIs, with more than four in ten universities in England expecting to be in a financial deficit by this summer; further notes the Government's announcement of 12 May 2025 that proposes restricting student visas, limiting the graduate route, and imposing a levy on universities' international student income; acknowledges the immense role that international students play in contributing to our country and our economy, while strengthening our soft power on the world stage; believes we must protect the UK's place as a world leader in research by safeguarding our reputation as a destination for the world's brightest minds; further believes that protecting university finances is of vital importance; therefore calls on the Government to urgently consult with the university and HEI sector on its immigration proposals; and further calls on the Government to move to a model where international student flows are reported separately to estimates of long-term migration to avoid counter-productive policies and to rapidly establish a review of higher education finance.

Sponsors: Ian Sollom

Source

Sector news

Restoring control over the immigration system: white paper

On Monday 12 May, the Home Office published a White Paper titled 'Restoring Control Over the Immigration System', outlining the government's long-term plans to reform immigration policy in the UK.

The paper sets out proposals to link immigration, skills, and visa systems more closely with efforts to grow the domestic workforce, reduce reliance on overseas labour, and support economic growth. It marks a shift towards a more restrictive and skills-focused approach to migration.

Key measures include:

- Extending the residency requirement for settlement from five to ten years.
- Tightening English language requirements across immigration routes, including for adult dependants.
- Removing the visa route for social care workers.
- Reducing the post-study work visa period for international students from two years to 18 months.
- Introducing a 6% levy on universities' income from international tuition fees.

The government estimates that these changes could reduce net migration by around 98,000 annually, with a target of reaching 240,000 by 2029–30.

The White Paper is part of the Prime Minister's broader "Plan for Change" aimed at reversing what has been described as years of "uncontrolled migration" and restoring public confidence in the system.

You can [read the full White Paper](#).

Net migration and international students: user needs – ONS

On Tuesday 14 May, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) published the findings of a recent consultation on whether to produce an additional estimate of international net migration that excludes students.

The engagement exercise, which ran from 22 January to 28 February 2025, sought views from users on three options, including maintaining the current approach or producing an alternative estimate using visa data or existing statistics by reason for migration. The majority of respondents, including academics, government departments, and local authorities, opposed the introduction of an additional estimate.

Concerns raised included the risk of confusion caused by publishing multiple estimates based on different definitions, and the potential perception that changes were politically motivated, which could damage public trust in official statistics.

While some users supported more analysis of student migration, the overall feedback indicated that an alternative headline estimate excluding students was not a priority. As a result, the ONS has decided not to publish a separate estimate at this time.

However, the ONS will continue to explore ways to provide further analysis of international student migration and improve the clarity and accessibility of existing statistics.

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

UK Research and Innovation: providing support through grants – NAO report

On Wednesday 14 May, the National Audit Office (NAO) published a report examining how UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) provides support through grants. The report assesses whether UKRI is effectively using its £9.6 billion annual budget to support research and innovation (R&I) in the UK.

The NAO found that UKRI has contributed to a globally respected R&I system, funding projects such as early-stage research in microbial fuel cells and the development of bone stem cell technology. However, the report highlights several areas for improvement:

- **Lack of Clear Objectives:** UKRI and the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) need to more clearly define the overarching outcomes desired from R&I spending.
- **Data Challenges:** UKRI requires better data to identify where resources are being spent and to support decision-making.
- **Risk Management:** While UKRI aims to take high-risk, high-reward funding decisions, it must ensure that its culture supports well-managed risk-taking.
- **Government Coordination:** There is a lack of consolidated direction from government departments, making it unclear what UKRI is being asked to achieve.

Gareth Davies, head of the NAO, stated: "Our recommendations are designed to help UKRI ensure its culture supports well-managed risk taking; develop better data to support decision making; and work with DSIT to define more clearly the overarching outcomes sought from its research and innovation spending."

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

International Students Research — Russell Group Students' Unions

On Wednesday 14 May, the Russell Group Students' Unions (RGSU), in partnership with the UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA), published a landmark report titled *Globally Competitive: A Report on the International Student Experience*. Drawing on responses from nearly 5,000 international students across Russell Group universities, the report provides a comprehensive overview of the international student experience in the UK.

Key findings:

- 70% of international students choose the UK for its high-quality education and globally recognised universities
- 50% report experiencing poor mental health while studying in the UK
- The median monthly living cost for international students (excluding tuition fees) is £1,402, rising to £1,635 for those in London
- Restrictions on self-employment prevent international students from gaining valuable professional experience, despite the UK's need for skilled workers

- 33% of students report experiencing racism in the UK
- 75% of students consider the UK their first choice for studying abroad

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

New research could enhance the future of teaching in higher education

On Wednesday 14 May, Northumbria University announced the launch of a major new research project that could reshape teaching practices across UK higher education. The three-year RE:PLAY project, led by Professor Nic Whitton, aims to explore and evidence the effectiveness of playful learning in universities.

Backed by nearly £800,000 from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and additional contributions from partner institutions, the £1 million study is the first of its kind to systematically investigate how interactive and experiential methods—such as role play, games, digital simulations, and quests—can enhance student engagement and better equip graduates for a rapidly changing world.

The project will involve a consortium of universities, including Northumbria, Durham, Sussex, Anglia Ruskin, Coventry, and University of the Arts London. Six additional universities will participate in research surveys.

The research will be conducted in four phases and will culminate in a framework and toolkit for designing effective playful learning experiences. It also aims to shift institutional attitudes, build confidence among academics, and better prepare students with creativity, resilience, and adaptability.

You can read more about the project on [Northumbria University's Research Portal](#).

Apprenticeship funding rules, 2025 to 2026

On Wednesday 14 May, the Department for Education published updated apprenticeship funding rules for the 2025–26 academic year, alongside a summary of changes, introducing a range of reforms aimed at improving flexibility, quality, and value for money.

Key changes include:

- **Reduced Minimum Duration:** The minimum apprenticeship duration has been reduced from 12 months to 8 months, allowing for shorter, more flexible programmes where appropriate.
- **Foundation Apprenticeships:** A new entry-level pathway has been introduced to support young people to develop essential skills while earning a wage.
- **Off-the-Job Training:** Providers will no longer need to calculate off-the-job training hours individually. Each apprenticeship standard will now include a defined minimum figure.
- **Assessment Reform:** A revised set of principles will allow for more flexible and proportionate assessment, including the ability for some assessments to take place during the programme and for providers to deliver certain elements.
- **Level 7 Apprenticeships:** The rules reaffirm support for Level 7 apprenticeships where they meet employer needs and align with occupational standards, particularly where they lead to professional qualifications or registration. However, programmes without a clear occupational focus—such as some management qualifications—will be subject to closer scrutiny, with a renewed emphasis on ensuring that funding is used for training that reflects a genuine job role.

These changes form part of the government’s wider “Plan for Change”, aimed at strengthening the apprenticeship system, widening participation, and supporting economic growth.

You can [read the full summary of changes](#).