



The All-Party Parliamentary **University Group**

University APPG weekly update

13 – 17 May 2024

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

If you would like more information on parliamentary business, or advice on engaging with Parliament or a parliamentarian, please contact:

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Parliamentary business

Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill – Committee Stage (Day 4)

On Tuesday 14 May, the Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill received its fourth day of Committee Stage in the House of Lords.

Amendment 33 was discussed. This amendment sought to remove the prohibition on a person publishing a statement indicating that they would have acted in a way prohibited by Clause 1 if it were legal to do so.

Baroness Chapman of Darlington (Labour) moved the amendment, describing Clause 4 as ‘one of the most egregious, nonsensical and unnecessary clauses in the entire Bill.’ She called it ‘extraordinary’ and probed whether there was an equivalent clause in any other Bill.

Lord Wallace of Saltaire (Liberal Democrat) highlighted the report from the House of Lords Constitution Committee that stated ‘In our view, clauses 4(1)(a) and 4(1)(b) unduly limit freedom of speech ... The House may wish to consider whether clause 4 should be removed from the Bill.’ He said it would be wise for the government to withdraw the Clause before it is returned to the House of Commons.

Several peers also intervened in the discussion on Amendment 33, including Lord Warner (Crossbench), Lord Beith (Liberal Democrat), Lord Davies of Brixton (Labour), Lord Hendy (Labour), and Baroness Noakes (Conservative).

Baroness Neville-Rolfe, Minister at the Cabinet Office, described Clause 4 as an ‘instrumental part of the Bill.’ She explained that it prohibited public bodies from publishing statements indicating that they intend to engage in activity prohibited by the Bill. This includes statements indicating that the public body would have acted differently if the legislation had not been in place.

The Minister clarified that Clause 4 would not affect the statements of individuals unless they were speaking as or on behalf of a public authority. Even when an individual was speaking on behalf of a public authority, the ban applied only to the public authority itself and there was no personal liability for the individual.

Amendment 33 was withdrawn.



The Bill will continue for its fifth day of Committee Stage on Tuesday 4 June.

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

Legal migration – Home Affairs Committee oral evidence

On Wednesday 15 May, the Home Affairs Committee heard oral evidence on the topic of legal migration from Professor Brian Bell, Chair at Migration Advisory Committee (MAC); Mr Marley Morris, Associate Director at Institute of Public Policy Research; and Dr Madeleine Sumption, Director at Migration Observatory.

Professor Brian Bell set out the MAC review’s conclusion that the Graduate visa route is fulfilling the objectives government set for it when introduced: increasing numbers of students in line with the International Education Strategy (IES), allowing talent to remain in the UK, and increasing the attractiveness of the offer in the student market.

Dame Diana Johnson MP (Labour), Chair of the Home Affairs Committee, asked Professor Bell about the government’s five-point plan. He spoke about the restrictions on dependants, stressing that undergraduates had never been allowed to bring dependants and attributed the decision to restrict dependants to the huge increase in dependants over recent years. He thought it was reasonable that the government looked at this as it wasn’t the intention for the student route to be for dependants. The government estimated this policy decision would reduce migration numbers by 140,000.

Diana Johnson MP asked whether he agreed with the government’s estimates of the impact of the recent policy decisions (i.e. reducing dependants) on net migration. He thought there would actually be greater reductions as it assumed no behavioural response from applicants, and this could already been seen in student numbers.

Marley Morris thought the government’s five-point plan was trying to ‘have its cake and eat it’ by wanting to reduce net migration but not tackling big challenges with the HE funding model and social care model that are driving current figures.

Tim Loughton MP (Conservative) questioned the huge increase in the number of dependants, asking whether the increase in one year Master’s courses were “pandering” to a particular market. Professor Bell said there was nothing unusual about a one-year Master’s programme and said some of the increase was due to the UK opening up post-Covid quicker than competitors like Canada and Australia. He thought numbers would continue to decline separately to government policy. He



thought universities increased these programmes as their funding model was in crisis, mentioning the domestic fee freeze leading to a 25% reduction in real terms.

Tim Loughton MP asked whether there were particular countries that led to the increases. Professor Bell said 40% of students were from India, 40% from China, 10% from Nigeria and a mix across the remaining 10%. The UK is dependent on these three countries. Tim Loughton asked whether competitor countries allowed dependants. Professor Bell wasn't entirely sure about the US but said Australia and Canada did allow dependants so had a more generous offer which would likely lead to students not choosing the UK.

James Daly MP (Conservative) pointed out the review found 41% of graduate visa holders earn less than £21K a year. Professor Bell said that was correct, but only at certain points in their career. James Daly thought the Graduate route therefore wasn't meeting the government's objectives, which Professor Bell pushed back on given the stated 600,000 target in the IES. James Daly MP thought the Graduate route needed reforming and pushed his idea of a 'price floor' where courses had to cost at least £15/20k a year so that visa-free access to the labour market met government's objectives. Professor Bell mentioned that the data used in the report was from 2020/21 so university course prices were likely to have risen. He also pushed back on the idea, arguing that 'brightest and best' was different to 'richest'.

James Daly MP thought it was 'crystal clear' that the Graduate visa route didn't offer any value at all to the skills of the labour market. Professor Bell said it was 'broadly fair' and stressed that the government hadn't asked whether the graduate route was necessary - if so, the arguments would have been less compelling for the Graduate route.

Professor Bell stressed that looking at comparisons 15 months after graduation, a larger proportion of international graduates were in the top bracket and switched into the skilled worker route therefore retaining talent; it had had a 'small effect'.

Brendan Clarke-Smith MP (Conservative) asked whether there had been research into which universities those international students that went on to higher skilled jobs came from i.e. are they from Russell Group universities. He referred to a suggestion that access to the Graduate route could be limited to some universities.

Professor Bell said on average 10% of postgraduates that study at the top 200 universities in the world (including almost all Russell Groups) go onto the Graduate route, whereas around 30% go onto the Graduate route from the lower ranked universities. A significant part of the reason for this is the nationality of students i.e.



some universities rely on Chinese students that are more likely to go straight back after their studies. There is currently no data to link universities with the earnings of graduates on the graduate route. He mentioned Home Office statistics that showed earnings by nationality. He stressed that we don't know which jobs those on the Graduate route were doing, just their earnings, giving an example of earning £40k but as a bricklayer.

Marco Longhi MP (Conservative) asked Madeleine Sumption whether there should be a 600,000 target and she indicated that she wasn't sure. He questioned the export strategy element given that international students mainly came from three countries. Professor Bell said he saw 'no point' of the 600,000 target and thought government should stop setting targets. However, he stressed that immigration is being used to solve issues with broader funding models like higher education - universities are being 'crippled' on the domestic fee and research sides.

Marco Longhi MP then voiced general concerns about the expansion of higher education and quality and the competition between international and domestic graduates.

Professor Bell stressed the graduate premium overall, but admitted there was a tail of those that do not financially benefit from university. The government had made progress publicising data on graduate outcomes. Addressing the competition point, he stressed that numbers on the Graduate route were relatively small: maximum 200,000 people at any point so had a minimum effect. There was a net positive effect on overall GDP per capita, but minimal negative effect on GDP per capita amongst the working age population.

Finally, Professor Bell said that although there wasn't good data, overstaying on student visas had been very low.

You can [find the transcript here](#) when it becomes available and [watch the session](#).

Renters (Reform) Bill - second reading

On Wednesday 15 May, the Renters (Reform) Bill received its second reading in the House of Lords.

Baroness Taylor (Labour) highlighted concerns raised by UUK and other higher education sector bodies about the potential consequences of abolishing fixed term tenancies on the supply of student accommodation in the private sector and proposals to enable landlords to serve notice to student tenants between 1 June and



30 September. She also asked if the Minister would talk to the sector about their concerns. Baroness Pinnock (Liberal Democrat) asked the Minister about protections for students, specifically those whose courses start in January. Lord Khan (Labour) closed the debate for Labour by welcoming the Bill's key reforms – abolishing section 21 evictions, simplification of tenancies, and the creation of a new ombudsman.

Responding on behalf of the government, Baroness Swinburne acknowledged the briefings from the higher education sector that the Bill, as originally drafted would have interrupted the student housing market, reducing the supply of vital properties in university towns and cities. She said the government has listened to these concerns by introducing a new ground for possession which will allow landlords renting to students to seek possession ahead of each new academic year, facilitating the yearly cycle of short-term student tenancies. She said the ground has been carefully designed to balance the needs of both landlords and students. It will apply to any property that is let to full-time students, so long as the landlord gives prior notice to tenants at the start of the tenancy that the grounds will apply.

Regarding different dates being used rather than the traditional academic year, Baroness Swinburne said there is nothing to stop landlords renting properties in January to students starting their studies at that time. She claimed that most students will continue to move in line with the traditional academic year. This provides a backstop for the majority of students studying from September. She said the alternative would be to allow the grounds to be used at any point in the year, which would give tenants no certainty. She said that discussions with the sector are ongoing.

The Bill will progress to Committee Stage.

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



Forthcoming business

The UK Government's support of education for Overseas Territories students - Foreign Affairs Sub-Committee on the Overseas Territories oral evidence

On Monday 20 May from 1:45pm, the Foreign Affairs Sub-Committee on the Overseas Territories will hear oral evidence as part of their enquiry on overseas students.

The committee will hear evidence from:

- Luke Hall MP, Minister for Skills, Apprenticeships and Higher Education at Department for Education
- Adam Pile, Deputy Director, Overseas Territories & Polar Directorate at Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office
- Philippa Rouse, Director Migration & Citizenship, Senior Responsible Officer, Future Border & Immigration System Programme at Home Office

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

Industry and Regulators Committee report: 'Must do better: the Office for Students and the looming crisis facing higher education' – HoL debate

On Tuesday 21 May from 3:45pm, there will be a House of Lords debate on the Industry and Regulators Committee report: 'Must do better: the Office for Students and the looming crisis facing higher education'. This debate was tabled by Baroness Taylor of Bolton (Labour).

Speakers include:

- Lord Agnew of Oulton (Conservative)
- Baroness Barran (Conservative)
- Viscount Chandos (Labour)



- Lord Clement-Jones (Liberal Democrat)
- Lord Freyberg (Crossbench)
- Lord Johnson of Marylebone (Conservative)
- Lord Lucas (Conservative)
- Lord Mann (Non-affiliated)
- Lord Norton of Louth (Conservative)
- Lord Parekh (Labour)
- Lord Storey (Liberal Democrat)
- Baroness Taylor of Bolton (Labour)
- Baroness Twycross (Labour)
- Lord Wharton of Yarm (Conservative)
- Lord Willetts (Conservative)

You can [read the House of Lords Library briefing](#) and the [Industry and Regulators Committee report](#).

You can [view an up-to-date list of speakers](#) and [watch the session](#).

Commercialising Research – Science, Innovation and Technology Committee oral evidence

On Wednesday 22 May from 9:30am, the Science, Innovation and Technology Committee will hear oral evidence as part of their new enquiry on commercialising research. No call for written evidence has yet been launched.

The committee will hear evidence from:

- Bryon Dixon OBE, CEO at Micro-Fresh
- Julian Hanak, CEO at Purespring Therapeutics
- Simon Andrews, Executive Director at Fraunhofer UK



- Rosa Wilkinson, Director of Policy at High Value Manufacturing Catapult
- Dr David Wilkes, Director of Innovation Ecosystem at Innovate UK (UK Research and Innovation)

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

DSIT – oral questions

On Wednesday 22 May from 11:30am, the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, Rt Hon Michelle Donelan MP, and her ministerial colleagues will answer questions in the House of Commons.

Relevant tabled questions include:

- What steps she is taking with Cabinet colleagues to ensure that Government-funded research is used to help increase levels of productivity. [Theresa Villiers MP, Conservative]
- What steps her Department is taking to help reduce the use of animal testing in research. [Andrew Rosindell MP, Conservative]
- What recent discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on the potential impact of the Net Zero Research and Innovation Delivery Plan on the UK's target to become a science and technology superpower by 2030. [Kenny MacAskill MP, Alba Party]

You can [read the full list of tabled questions](#) and [watch the session](#).



Written Questions

Arms Trade: Israel

Martyn Day MP (SNP): To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, if she will make an assessment of the potential implications for her policies on arms exports to Israel of protests by university students. [UIN 24681]

Alan Mak MP (Conservative): The UK has one of the most robust and transparent export licensing systems in the world, enshrined in law through the Export Control Act and implemented through our Strategic Export Licensing Criteria.

This informs our approach to export licensing – both for our extant licences and for new licence applications for exports to Israel. All decisions are assessed on a case-by-case basis against our licensing criteria.

Apprentices and Training: Disadvantaged

Andrew Bridgen MP (Independent): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to help disadvantaged children access (a) traineeships and (b) apprenticeships. [UIN 25235]

Luke Hall MP (Conservative): Apprenticeships offer great opportunities for young people who are starting out in their careers, and the department is committed to supporting young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to access these opportunities more easily.

The Apprenticeship Support and Knowledge (ASK) programme, funded at £3.2 million per year, provides schools and further education colleges across England with a free, bespoke package of comprehensive information and supports young people from all backgrounds and areas to access apprenticeships. The department is expanding the ASK Development Schools project in the 2023/24 academic year from 40 to 60 schools, including those in disadvantaged areas. This provides bespoke support for students in years 10 and 11 at levels one and below, who have the potential to progress into an apprenticeship but who are facing significant personal barriers such as learning difficulties, disabilities, or emotional, behavioural development issues.

The department has also tripled the care leavers' bursary for apprentices under the age of 25 from £1000 to £3000, helping even more young people to access and



complete their apprenticeships, and continues to pay an additional £1,000 to employers and providers to support apprentices aged 16-18, care leavers and those with an Education, Health and Care plan aged 24 and under. The department is also supporting young people to undertake apprenticeships by fully funding training costs for new apprentices aged 16-21 in non-levy paying employers, who tend to be small and medium-sized enterprises, from April 2024.

As part of the government's commitment to provide a comprehensive and clear skills offer for employers and individuals, in August 2023 the traineeships programme was integrated into the 16-19 study programme and adult education provision. All the elements of the traineeship programme, English and mathematics, work experience, employability, and occupational skills and qualifications will continue to be funded for 16-19 year olds as part of the national 16-19 study programme. Providers with access to funding can continue to offer traineeship type programmes for young people who need support to get into work, apprenticeships, or further learning.

Anti-semitism

John Hayes MP (Conservative): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many universities have adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of anti-Semitism. [UIN 25406]

Luke Hall MP (Conservative): As of 10 May 2024, 245 higher education (HE) providers in England, including all but six universities, have adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism.

While the decision to adopt the definition rests with individual HE providers, the government will continue to encourage all to adopt the definition. Adopting this widely recognised educative tool is a signal that providers take these issues seriously.

Overseas Students

Lord Wigley (Plaid Cymru): To ask His Majesty's Government what representations they have received from UK universities proposing the relaxation of restrictions for overseas students, such as rules relating to their employment in the UK after graduation. [UIN HL4317]

Baroness Barran (Conservative): The government seeks to ensure that the UK has a fair and robust migration policy whilst maintaining the UK's place as a top destination for the best and brightest students from around the world. The UK has four



universities in the top 10, and 17 in the top 100. The UK has a highly sought after higher education (HE) experience, which is respected by students across the globe.

The government recognises the significant economic and cultural contribution that international students make to the UK's HE sector and their positive impact on society as a whole.

Ministers and departmental officials regularly engage with the HE sector on a range of issues, including on international students.

Universities: Finance

Jim Shannon MP (DUP): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of reforming university funding models to reduce dependence on the income of international students. [UIN 24915]

Luke Hall MP (Conservative): It is important that there is a sustainable system to support students and support higher education (HE) that is responsive to the needs of the labour market and the wider economy, and that is fair to students and fair to taxpayers. The government keeps the higher education (HE) funding system under continuous review to ensure that it remains sustainable and provides many different opportunities for learners to acquire vital skills. Longer-term funding plans for the HE sector will be set out at the next multi-year Spending Review, in line with the approach to long-term public spending commitments across government.

In 2021/22, the total income of the HE sector in England was £40.8 billion, up from £28 billion in 2014/15, including £8.8 billion income from international student fees. Of the £40.8 billion, approximately £16 billion was provided by the government. Over the current spending review period, both the Department for Education and the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology are investing £1.3 billion in capital funding to support teaching and research.

The department is proud that the UK is home to some of the world's top universities who benefit from strong international ties, so much so that the UK HE system has educated 58 of current and recent world leaders and has 4 out of the top 10 globally ranked universities. Attracting the brightest students internationally is good for the UK's universities and delivers growth at home.

Education policy is a devolved matter, and different HE funding arrangements apply in the devolved administrations.



Medicine: Education

Rachael Maskell MP (Labour): To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, if she will hold discussions with the (a) Medical Schools Council and (b) British Medical Association on the effectiveness of preference-informed allocation for foundation placements for medical graduates. [UIN 25505]

Andrew Stephenson MP (Conservative): The UK Foundation Programme Office (UKFPO) manages the national application process for the UK Foundation Programme, on behalf of the four statutory education bodies for the United Kingdom. The UKFPO changed the allocation process for the programme this year to a Preference Informed Allocation method. This consisted of applicants being given a computer-generated rank, and removed the requirement for them to sit the Situational Judgement Test. This change was based on engagement with stakeholders, including the Medical Schools Council, and the British Medical Association.

When confirming the move to the new system last year, the UKFPO set out that once implemented, it would be kept under constant review, to make sure it is working well for applicants. The UKFPO has confirmed that 75% of applicants received their first choice of programme this year, a 4% increase on last year.

Forced Marriage: British Nationality

Baroness Gohir (Crossbench): To ask His Majesty's Government between 2018 and 2022 how many British citizens, if any, have reported being in a forced marriage to individuals in the UK who have students visas. [UIN HL4278]

Lord Sharpe of Epsom (Conservative): Since April 2019, police forces in England and Wales have been required to provide quarterly data returns to the Home Office on so-called 'honour'-based abuse offences, including forced marriage. The most recent data show 172 forced marriage related offences recorded in the year ending March 2023.

In addition, the joint Home Office and Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) also publishes statistics on forced marriage cases reported to the unit. The most recent statistics show the FMU provided support in 280 cases of forced marriage in 2023.





The Home Office does not hold data on forced marriages relating to individuals with student visas.



Sector News

Universities UK and Creative UK warn the Prime Minister about the impact changing the graduate visa could have on the country's creative industries – joint letter

On Monday 13 May, Universities UK and Creative UK published a joint open letter highlighting the impact of international students to the country's creative industries.

It calls on the Prime Minister to protect the Graduate visa:

The Graduate visa has helped to keep the UK as a top study destination in an increasingly competitive global market, making a £60 billion impact to the economy and bolstering the country's reputation and soft power influence. It's important we continue to attract the best global creative talent as their skills and passion will help to ensure that our creative industries remain world leading.

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

Digital sustainability in tertiary education: trends, challenges, and sector insights – Jisc report

On Monday 13 May, Jisc published a report examining the complexities of digital sustainability, including the challenges and opportunities confronting those working in tertiary education and research institutions across the UK.

The report explores some key trends around digital sustainability in tertiary education as well as potential solutions, and it underscores the importance of collective action in shaping a more sustainable future for education and beyond.

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

Graduate route: rapid review – MAC report

On Tuesday 14 May, the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) published its rapid review into the Graduate route.



The report recommends:

- The Graduate Route should remain in place in its current form. It found that the Graduate route is broadly achieving the objectives set out by the Home Office, while also supporting government education policy as outlined in the International Education Strategy.
- The government should establish a mandatory registration system for international recruitment agents and subagents which encompasses the quality controls in the voluntary AQF, consulting with the Devolved Administrations to ensure UK-wide coverage.
- Universities should be required to publish data on their spend on recruitment agents and the number of international students recruited through such means annually, in the service of disclosure and transparency.
- The government should only open new migration routes or make significant policy changes when it has a clear plan for how it will collect and monitor data to assess the effectiveness of the route against its objectives and understand wider impacts.
- The Home Office introduces a requirement for universities to provide confirmation of the course outcome (e.g. class of degree) on the Student route, in addition to confirmation that a course has been successfully completed which is currently required.
- The Home Office undertakes a review of the data variables used for analytical purposes across the largest visa routes (including the Skilled Worker route, Student route and Graduate route) to develop a clear definition of what these data represent, and the quality of each variable collected.
- The government should explore and make further use of the Home Office-HMRC matched data across all immigration routes.

Responding to the report, Vivienne Stern MBE, Chief Executive of Universities UK, said:

The MAC's recommendation that the Graduate route should remain on its current terms is extremely important and welcome. The uncertainty caused by the decision to review the visa has been toxic. We hope and expect that government now listens to the advice they have been given and provides categorical reassurance that the Graduate visa is here to stay.



As the MAC report makes clear, international students who remain to work in the UK on the Graduate Route are net contributors to the UK, important to our ability to compete as a study destination, and crucial to university finances. We understand the political pressure to reduce migration but, as the report makes clear, changes introduced earlier this year to prevent postgraduate taught students bringing dependants have already had a very significant effect. Recruitment ahead of September is already looking incredibly challenging, and the government should recognise this and that going further would be a serious mistake.

We agree there is room to improve, building on what universities themselves have done, to tighten agent management and increase resilience in the system.

What is needed now is stability - we need the Government to provide much needed reassurance to both universities and international students that the Graduate route is here to stay.

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

Analysis of migrants use of the Graduate route – Home Office statistics release

On Tuesday 14 May, the Home Office released data looking at migrants' journeys through the UK's immigration system, with a particular focus on those on the Graduate route. The report looks at who is entering the Graduate route and what they do after their leave to remain expires. It also includes early insights on their earnings by linking Home Office visa records to HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) income data.

You can [view the data release](#).

Student visa: Views of students and higher education institutions – Home Office analysis

On Tuesday 14 May, the Home Office released a report on the views of students and higher education institutions on student visa routes.

The research aimed to:



- Understand why international students chose to study in the UK, awareness of policy restrictions, the relative attractiveness of policy features and how these compare to international offerings, and the relative importance of other drivers outside the sphere to policy influence.
- Gather details on post-study work intentions and reflections on the Sponsored Study visa route interacting with other visa routes (for example, Skilled Worker, Graduate) as means of retaining international talent and pathway for high-skilled migrants to work and settle in the UK.
- Learn from user experiences and identify areas for improvement in operational delivery, including experiences of the fully digital application process.
- Provide insight on HEIs' understanding of sponsorship requirements, how sponsors comply, any external support needed to overcome barriers and burdens, and the impact of sponsorship policy on international student recruitment efforts; the research aimed to address what influences actions taken by sponsors when recruiting domestically and internationally and whether this varied by different faculties.

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

MAC review 'whitewashes' flaws in immigration system – CPS press release

On Tuesday 14 May, the Centre for Policy Studies (CPS) published responses to the Migration Advisory Committee rapid review of the Graduate route from the authors of CPS immigration report, 'Taking Back Control'.

Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

We urgently need to unwind the sector's growing dependency on foreign students. The graduate route should be scrapped and we must fundamentally rethink our International Education Strategy (IES), including the completely arbitrary target of attracting 600,000 foreign students pa.

The MAC's review today endorses the route partly because the IES would likely fail without it and their conclusions have clearly been constrained by the narrow terms of reference deliberately set by the government. If you order white paint, you get a whitewash.



As ever with migration policy, SW1 has become completely desensitised to vast numbers. If these universities are selling good quality education to students they have nothing to fear by the graduate route being scrapped. However if their business model is premised on the ability to work in the U.K. with no minimum salary requirements, then that needs to change.

Neil O'Brien MP said:

The MAC's rapid review into the Graduate route is a whitewash – it could hardly be anything else, given its narrow terms of reference and the Government's pretty clear preference not to do anything. But although a whitewash, the new data in the report is explosive. For example, working 40 hours a week on the minimum wage gets you just under £2k a month – yet the data shows that the great majority of people on the Graduate route earn less than that on average. In fact, people on the Graduate visa are on average earning half as much as UK workers. The Graduate visa has been a boon for dodgy employers.

The MAC have followed the essay question set by the government – and fair enough. DfE stakeholders will be happy. But if we want to keep our promises to the public, and get to a selective system that maximises the benefits, we should go back to what we agreed under the Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition government. Study visas should be available, but should be for study. Work visas should be available for those who will come to do high-wage, high-skill work. The two things are different.

Instead, we are pursuing an arbitrary target of 600,000 international students, and the expansion of universities for their own sake. Vast debt-fuelled higher education expansion been part of our economic model since the Blair era. But if that model was going to lead to an economic miracle, it sure is taking a long time to turn up.

You can [read the full press release](#).

Student perceptions of generative AI – Jisc report

On Tuesday 14 May, Jisc published a report providing an update on how students are currently using generative AI and exploring its potential impact on their learning experience.

Key changes since their previous report are:



- **Transition to collaborative learning:** Students/learners increasingly view generative AI as a collaborative tool to coach and support active learning and critical thinking, using these tools as a digital assistant rather than seeing them purely as answer providers.
- **Emphasis on future skills:** Students/learners emphasised the importance of generative AI-ready skills relevant to their future industries. There's a growing demand for an education to integrate generative AI across the curriculum and reflect the AI enabled world we all now inhabit.
- **Ethics, equity, and accessibility concerns:** Students/learners are increasingly aware of and concerned about equity, bias, and accessibility issues related to AI, advocating for measures that address these challenges to ensure a safe, inclusive, and responsive educational experience.
- **Comprehensive integration and educator competence:** There's a clear expectation by students/learners for comprehensive generative AI integration across education, with competent usage by educators and policies that ensure a fair and effective AI-enhanced learning environment.

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

Annual Report 2023 – OIA report

On Wednesday 15 May, the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) published their annual report for 2023.

The Report includes information about:

- The number and outcomes of complaints we received and closed
- Trends in complaints
- Examples of the complaints students made to us
- How we share learning from complaints
- How we work with others in the higher education sector
- Information about developments in our organisation over the year.

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



Financial sustainability of higher education providers in England: 2024 – OfS report

On Thursday 16 May, the Office for Students (OfS) published a report

The report highlights five key risks affecting the sector. These are:

- Continuing decline in the real-terms value of income from UK undergraduates combined with inflationary and economic pressures on operating costs.
- A recent apparent reduction in applications from UK and international students after years of strong growth, especially from international students.
- A higher education financial model that has become reliant on fee income from international students, with a particular vulnerability where recruitment is predominantly from a single country.
- The affordability of necessary estates maintenance and development and the significant cost of investment needed to reduce carbon emissions as part of providers' commitments to achieve net zero.
- Cost of living difficulties for students and staff, which challenge both student recruitment and the support needed by students during their time in higher education.

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

Protected beliefs in higher education – AdvanceHE guidance notes

On Thursday 16 May, AdvanceHE published guidance supporting higher education institutions (HEIs) in understanding protected beliefs and seemingly competing legal duties related to protected beliefs, rights of free speech and academic freedom within the law, and protections against unlawful discrimination and harassment, within the present UK legal framework.

The guidance summarises the learnings from the case law and supports HEIs to consider holistically: (i) how to approach protected beliefs and navigate competing duties or obligations; (ii) how to set justifiable policies in more challenging areas; and (iii) how to take decisions that are lawful, reasonable, and proportionate.





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

Higher Education Provider Data: Finance – HESA data release

On Friday 17 May, the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) published new higher education provider finance data.

You can [explore the data](#).

