



All-Party Parliamentary University Group

Weekly update

13 – 17 October 2025

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

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Parliamentary business

Manchester Terrorism Attack – HoC Debate

On Monday 13 October 2025, the House of Commons held a debate on the Manchester Terrorism Attack. Several MPs raised concerns about rising antisemitism in the UK, with a particular focus on universities and campus life.

Chris Philp MP argued that antisemitism is “rife” on university campuses and called for government funding to be withdrawn from universities that fail to tackle it effectively. He urged stronger action to ensure institutions confront extremism rather than ignore it.

Shabana Mahmood MP, Home Secretary, responded that universities already have clear responsibilities to protect Jewish students. She noted that the Secretary of State for Education has been engaging with universities on these duties and that the Office for Students has powers to fine or cut public funding from institutions that fail to act. She stressed that the university sector “needs to step up” and that the Government would ensure it does.

Graham Stringer MP (Labour) cited antisemitic incidents linked to cultural figures appearing on university campuses, such as at Manchester University, and urged the Government to address hate speech in these settings.

Alex Sobel MP (Labour/Co-op) highlighted that his constituency has five universities with 1,500 Jewish students, the highest number in the country. He referenced an attack on a Hillel House in 2024 and asked what would be done to protect Jewish student centres on campuses nationwide. Mahmood agreed to provide reassurance and support, confirming collaboration with the Education Secretary and the regulator.

Luke Charters MP (Labour) praised York’s two universities, stating that antisemitism has no place on their campuses, and asked for assurance that all universities will be equipped to root it out.

The discussion centred on concerns about antisemitism spreading within university environments, with cross-party agreement that universities must take stronger action. The Government reaffirmed that the Department for Education and the Office for Students have the authority to penalise universities that fail to protect Jewish students and ensure their safety on campus.

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

Forthcoming business

Department for Education - Oral Questions

On Monday 20 October, at 2.30pm the Secretary of State for Education, Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson MP, and her ministerial colleagues, will answer oral questions in the House of Commons.

Relevant questions include:

- Anneliese Midgley (Labour), Linsey Farnsworth (Labour), and Toby Perkins (Labour):
What steps her Department is taking to ensure that it meets its target of two-thirds of young people participating in higher-level learning

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

Negotiations with the European Union for the UK to rejoin Erasmus – HoL Oral Question

On Tuesday 21 October, an oral question titled “Negotiations with the European Union for the UK to rejoin Erasmus” will take place in the House of Lords. This question has been tabled by Baroness Coussins (Crossbench).

You [can watch the session](#).

Higher Education and Funding: Threat of Insolvency and International Students - Education Committee oral evidence session

On Tuesday 21 October from 10:00am, the House of Commons Education Committee will hear oral evidence as part of their inquiry into “Higher Education and Funding: Threat of Insolvency and International Students”.

Witnesses include:

- Neil Smyth, Partner, Mills and Reeve LLP
- Adam Leach, National Civic Impact Director, Civic University Network
- Carol Prokopyszyn, Chief Financial Officer, University of Manchester, British Universities Finance Directors Group
- Vivienne Stern MBE, Chief Executive, Universities UK

- Professor Brian Bell, Chair, Migration Advisory Committee
- Dani Payne, Head of Education and Social Mobility, Social Market Foundation
- Rachel MacSween, Director of Client Partnerships and Stakeholder Engagement, UK International and Europe, IDP Education UK and Ireland
- Dr David Pilsbury, Secretary, International Higher Education Commission

You can watch the session.

Written questions and statements

Department for Work and Pensions: Apprentices: Finance

Natalie Fleet (Labour): (UIN77746) To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of withdrawing funding for level 7 apprenticeships on the number of people completing these apprenticeships.

Andrew Western: This government has a driving mission to break down barriers to opportunity.

From January 2026 the government will no longer fund level 7 apprenticeships except for young apprentices under the age of 22 and those under 25 who are care leavers or have an Education, Health and Care Plan. This will enable apprenticeship opportunities to be rebalanced towards young people and create more opportunities for those entering the labour market, who need skills and training to get on in their careers. All current level 7 apprentices and any who start before 1 January 2026 will be funded through to completion.

This decision was informed by a wide range of evidence, including Skills England's analysis of official apprenticeship statistics and engagement with a wide range of stakeholders. Skills England's evidence suggested there was unlikely to be a significant or unavoidable fall in the supply of these skills in the long term, post-defunding.

We are encouraging more employers to invest in upskilling their staff over 22 to level 7 where it delivers a benefit to the business and the individual. It will be for employers to determine the most appropriate training. There are alternative training options available to employers at level 7 including non-apprenticeship routes.

Department for Work and Pensions: Employment: Artificial Intelligence and Offshoring

Iqbal Mohamed (Independent): (UIN76751) To the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what steps his Department is taking to ensure that vocational and adult education programmes are aligned with employment opportunities that are less vulnerable to (a) offshoring and (b) becoming replaced by AI.

Andrew Western: The government is developing a comprehensive strategy for post-16 education and skills to break down barriers to opportunity and support the development of a skilled workforce in England.

This is backed by additional investment, as announced in the Spending Review, of £1.2 billion per year in skills by 2028-29. This will support the wide range of technical routes available across England in a broad range of sectors.

We are also widening the apprenticeships offer into a growth and skills offer, including new foundation apprenticeships, which will give more young people a foot in the door at the start of their working life.

We are targeting key growth sectors, including those identified in the Industrial Strategy, with specific skills plans to boost training in areas such as construction, manufacturing, defence and Digital and Technology.

All of this will be underpinned by the work of Skills England, which has been established as the national body responsible for identifying skills needs, simplifying the skills system, and aligning training to meet demand.

Sector news

Statement of changes to the Immigration Rules: HC 1333

A reduction in the length of the Graduate Route visa from two years to 18 months will take effect for all applications submitted on or after 1 January 2027, the Home Office has confirmed. The government has also formally reiterated that doctoral graduates will retain access to the three-year Graduate Route entitlement, which remains unchanged.

The announcement was set out in this week's Statement of Changes to the Immigration Rules, accompanied by a Home Office impact assessment outlining the expected financial implications for the higher education sector. The government estimates that the reform could result in a loss of tuition fee revenue of around £1.1 billion over the five-year appraisal period, with a high-end estimate of £2.3 billion.

These projections are based on Home Office modelling which anticipates a long-term annual reduction of approximately 12,000 international student visa applications as a consequence of the changes. However, the underlying assumptions largely mirror those used in the May 2025 immigration white paper, which were widely criticised across the sector for their limited evidence base and for underestimating the wider economic and cultural contribution of international students.

Sector bodies and university leaders have expressed concern that the shortened post-study work period could make the UK a less competitive destination compared with other major study destinations such as Australia, Canada, and the United States — each of which offers longer or more flexible post-graduation work options. The changes are expected to add to the financial pressures already facing many institutions reliant on international student fee income.

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

Delivering a joined-up post-16 skills system

Universities UK (UUK) and the Association of Colleges (AoC) brought together university and college leaders to develop principles-based recommendations for stronger partnership working between colleges and universities in England. This report explores the opportunities that a better coordinated and more coherent system can offer, including delivering on the government's stated ambition to expand access to higher level education and training.

The report draws on case studies of good practice in college-university partnerships working across England and presents proposals for policymakers and sector leaders to drive forward this important agenda.

Opportunities for stronger partnerships

There are many examples of strong partnership working between colleges and universities across England, all of which highlight the benefits of collaboration. These benefits include:

- Making it easier for people to progress through the education and the skills system.
- Playing a more active role as a service to employers.
- Strengthening the role colleges and universities can collectively play in driving regional growth and meeting skills needs.
- Deepening their role within local communities, improving health outcomes, in place-making, or driving the green transition.

However, it's important to recognise there are a number of barriers to collaboration between universities and colleges which impact partnership working, including funding pressures, a competitive environment and regulatory challenges.

Next steps

This new report signals the start of a new era of collaboration, which will unlock further opportunities for people, employers and communities across the country.

The leadership of universities and colleges is pivotal to driving collaboration, alongside the sector stewardship of the AoC and UUK. AOC and UUK are committed, working with their members across the country, to take forward this agenda - reflecting the principles and recommendations established in this report. We will be convening a group of college principals and university vice-chancellors over the coming year.

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

Universities UK Fair admissions code of practice (updated)

Universities UK (UUK), in partnership with GuildHE, has updated its Fair Admissions Code of Practice, setting out clear principles and standards to ensure that university and college admissions across the United Kingdom are fair, transparent, and accountable. The Code reaffirms the sector's collective commitment to uphold integrity and consistency in the way applicants are recruited and selected, both domestically and internationally.

This living framework provides a shared foundation for good practice, safeguarding applicants' interests and maintaining public confidence in higher education admissions. It is designed to complement existing regulatory requirements and institutional policies, and is regularly updated to reflect new challenges and developments across the sector.

The Code outlines a set of principles and commitments that signatory institutions agree to uphold. These include:

- Protecting applicants' interests – ensuring that recruitment and admissions practices are conducted ethically and without undue pressure, and that all offers are made transparently and fairly.
- Transparency and clarity – providing clear and timely information about entry requirements, selection criteria and decision-making processes.
- Selecting students based on merit and potential – assessing applicants individually, taking into account both achievements and contextual factors that demonstrate ability and potential to succeed.
- Using reliable and explainable methods – employing valid, evidence-based approaches to admissions that are monitored for consistency and fairness.
- Minimising barriers and addressing inequality – ensuring that no applicant is unfairly disadvantaged by background, circumstance, or opportunity.
- Maintaining robust governance and professionalism – ensuring that admissions processes are properly resourced, well managed, and accountable at every level of institutional practice.

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

Review of Higher Education Code of Governance – Committee of University Chairs

The Committee of University Chairs (CUC) has launched a review and refresh of the **Higher Education Code of Governance**. The review aims to ensure that the Code continues to provide an effective, future-facing framework to support good governance across all UK nations.

This project seeks to capture what is working well, while identifying areas where the Code and the sector more broadly can strengthen governance to ensure the continued success, sustainability and integrity of higher education. It recognises the diversity of governance arrangements across the UK, including the distinct Scottish

Code, and acknowledges the rapidly changing operating environment for universities — shaped by evolving student expectations, technological advances and increasing financial pressures.

A future-facing framework for governance

The refreshed Code will be designed to ensure that university governing bodies are well equipped to provide **insight, challenge, effective stewardship and robust accountability**, supporting institutions to navigate the complex challenges facing the sector.

The CUC's work will be informed by evidence gathered through a sector-wide **Call for Evidence**, which invites contributions from all those with an interest in higher education governance — including institutions, individuals, membership organisations, academics, students, and representatives from business and community bodies. Responses will help shape:

- The drafting of the refreshed Code
- The development of tools to support boards in assessing and improving their effectiveness; and
- The CUC's broader programme of work to strengthen governance across the UK sector

Sector engagement

Alongside the written consultation, the CUC will convene **roundtable discussions** and **thematic working groups** to capture diverse perspectives and experiences from across the higher education community. The consultation questions are intended as prompts to guide reflection and dialogue, with respondents encouraged to engage flexibly - whether through full responses, selected questions, or free-form submissions.

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

Supporting disabled students: OfS publishes considerations for universities and colleges

The Office for Students (OfS) has shared points for institutions to consider when reviewing the ways they support students with disabilities and improve their experiences of higher education.

The considerations are included in a new insight brief that sets out a range of evidence about the experiences of disabled students in higher education, which are persistently reported as poorer than those of their non-disabled peers.

This includes the views shared by final-year undergraduates as part of the National Student Survey (NSS), new polling, and statistics on the completion, progression, and attainment rates of disabled students.

It also summarises the findings from workshops the OfS held with representatives from universities and colleges about their experiences of implementing reasonable adjustments for disabled students.

Based on these insights, the OfS is encouraging universities and colleges to consider:

- What the law says about reasonable adjustments in higher education.
- Whether they are listening to and working with disabled students to improve their experiences and communicating with them effectively about reasonable adjustments and support.
- How disabled students may be affected by risks to equality of opportunity as set out in the OfS Equality of Opportunity Risk Register.
- The ways they are using staff training, data, and evaluation to plan and deliver effective support for disabled students that is personalised and responds to individual needs.
- Whether teaching and assessments are accessible for disabled students while maintaining their rigour and credibility.

The insight brief draws upon the work of the OfS's Disability in Higher Education Advisory Panel, which was established in April 2024 to provide the OfS with expert advice on enhancing disabled students' experiences in higher education and recommendations on how institutions can better support their educational experience.

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

2025 Beauhurst report on university spinouts

A new report published by Parkwalk, the UK's most active investor in university spinouts, together with analytics firm Beauhurst, reveals that investment in UK spinouts reached unprecedented levels in 2024, with a record £3.35bn raised – up 44.3% on the previous year.

The report shows that equity investment in spinouts has significantly recovered from the dip seen in 2023. The average value of equity raised rose from £4.96m in 2023 to £7.49m in 2024, reflecting stronger investor appetite and a willingness to back companies with potential for global scale.

Sectoral activity was once again led by Life Sciences, particularly in pharmaceuticals, biotechnology and clinical research with 182 deals H2 2024 to H1 2025. Deeptech also performed strongly, with AI and data infrastructure among the most active sub-sectors (152 deals H2 2024 to H1 2025) – mirroring national priorities under the UK's Modern Industrial Strategy.

Home to the Golden Triangle, the South East (£5.58bn), London (£4.27bn) and East of England (£4.25bn), remain the centres for spinout investment, responsible for 77.9% of total investment since 2015. However, the report highlights growing momentum across the UK with Manchester-based spinouts securing a record £56m in 2024, and universities in Edinburgh, Sheffield and Leeds becoming increasingly active. In June 2025, Parkwalk and North Gritstone launched the Northern Universities Venture Fund to provide greater access to investment for spinouts from the Northern Arc Universities of Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester and Sheffield – aiming to create a more balanced funding landscape across the UK.

Foreign investment remains a key contributor to UK spinout activity, with US-based funds participating in 113 deals in 2024. The record £3.35bn invested last year coincided with strong growth in average deal sizes for both UK–foreign co-investment and foreign-only investment. For UK–foreign co-investment, the average grew from £13.5m in 2023 to £22.8m in 2024, while foreign-only investment increased from £10.0m to £16.1m. Five of the eight largest transactions last year involved foreign investors, underlining the global appeal of UK spinouts.

The report highlights the stark challenges that spinouts face in raising scale-up capital. Hundreds of spinouts raise up to £5m but only 57 spinouts have gone on to raise between £20m and £29.9m and only 42 reached £30m to £39.9m. Many of these companies are over a decade old, reflecting not just long development timelines but the need for accessible scale-up capital.

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

Closing equality gaps in higher education demands systemic change, new TASO report finds

A new TASO report finds that robustly evaluated, integrated, institution-wide interventions are needed to effectively close equality gaps in higher education.

Higher education providers often tackle equality gaps through targeted interventions. However, this report, building on the work of Professor Liz Thomas, highlights the importance of a ‘whole-provider approach’ – one that aligns institutional policies and engages all stakeholders from senior leadership to staff and students.

The report ‘*Making it everyone’s business: Theories of change for whole-provider approaches in higher education*’ underscores the critical role of senior leadership in legitimising and prioritising equality-focused work, acting as a powerful driver for wider engagement and institutional reform. Without this top-level buy-in, there is a risk that initiatives are fragmented and less effective.

Examples of practice from the universities illustrate how strong governance structures, aligned strategies, and staff communities of practice are being leveraged to embed these principles.

The report identifies six ‘causal pathways’ that drive the aims of effective whole-provider approaches: cultural change through leadership; cultural change through institutional momentum; institutional coherence; capacity and confidence building; student engagement; and evidence-driven improvement.

Recommendations for higher education providers

1. Use a theory of change to frame the whole-provider approach: Developing a theory of change helps to identify key causal pathways and outcomes, forming a coherent strategy and basis for evaluation.
2. Be intentional about areas of focus and level of detail: Use the whole-provider approach toolkit to help identify and address strengths and areas for development. Clearly differentiate between student-facing interventions, institution-wide changes, and business-as-usual activity. Create more detailed theories of change for specific initiatives where needed.
3. Embed the provider’s context: Ground the approach in the provider’s specific context, informed by student and staff input, institutional data, and alignment with wider strategies.

4. Collaborate with staff and students: Involve a range of stakeholders, including professional services staff, academic staff, and students, to build shared ownership and ensure diverse perspectives.
5. Adopt an iterative process: Treat the theory of change as a living document, refining it over time through regular review and monitoring to remain responsive to change.

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

UCU issues notice for UK-wide industrial action ballot

The University and College Union (UCU) has served official notice to employers for a UK-wide industrial action ballot. The ballot will open on Monday 20 October and will give university staff the opportunity to vote on taking industrial action over pay, job security, and working conditions.

This marks the next phase of UCU's *We Are the University* campaign, which has seen branches across the country mobilising to build support both in workplaces and online. Over the six-week voting period, members are being encouraged to speak with colleagues and to deliver a strong turnout in favour of action.

Following the close of the ballot, a consultation week will be held from 1 to 5 December to gather feedback from members. The union's Higher Education Committee will then meet to determine the next steps, based on the outcome and the views expressed during consultation.

UCU General Secretary Jo Grady said that the ballot is an important opportunity for members to make their voices heard and to show collective strength at a time of growing pressure across the higher education sector.

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

OfS publishes student outcomes data for subcontracted courses

The Office for Students (OfS) has published new data that shows evidence of weaker outcomes for students taught under subcontractual arrangements.

The data provides additional detail about student outcomes under these arrangements by publishing outcome measures for individual, named partnerships for the first time. This increases transparency about outcomes for students in a part of the sector that has seen significant growth in recent years. The proportion of students studying through partnership agreements has more than doubled in recent years. In 2020-21, 67,550 full-time undergraduates studied through partnerships (4.6 per cent). This grew to 116,150 students in 2022-23 (7.7 per cent).

The data shows that, at a sector level, there is evidence of weaker outcomes for students taught under partnership arrangements. The OfS's student outcomes measures consider the proportion of students continuing, completing and progressing from their course to positive outcomes. For students studying under partnership arrangements:

- 77% of students continue their courses into a second year, compared to 88 per cent of full-time first degree students at the sector as a whole
- 74% of students completed their courses, compared to 87 per cent sector-wide
- 57% went on to good outcomes 15 months after finishing their courses, compared to 71% across the sector.

The OfS has recently consulted on new proposals to ensure that risks to students and taxpayers arising from subcontractual arrangements are effectively identified and addressed. The OfS will publish decisions after all responses have been analysed and considered.

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

UUK submission to the Autumn Budget 2025

Investment in higher education at the Autumn Budget will be crucial to supporting the government's missions.

UUK's submission to the upcoming Autumn Budget sets out the role the higher education sector already plays in powering economic growth and opportunity, outlining an offer for how the sector can go further, and making recommendations for government to support this.

Universities are critical partners to delivering the government's missions, driving growth and productivity, fostering the innovations and research to fuel our futures, and widening opportunity. They play a central role in their local communities, boost local economies and are major international exporters.

With the right support, they can go even further, and our submission sets out proposals to protect the skills pipeline and prepare graduates for the job market, maximise the contribution of university R&D and further break down barriers to opportunity.

This vital role in delivering our shared, urgent, national mission shows why the sustained, long-term erosion of funding for teaching and research, which has created a financial storm for the sector, must be addressed. To secure universities' considerable potential contributions for the good of the nation, there must be a stable financial settlement delivered through this Budget.

UUK's proposal:

This investment in growth, and people's future, should be achieved through:

1. Fixing the foundations, by increasing critical funding streams in line with inflation - including research funding, tuition fees, and direct government teaching funding via the Strategic Priorities Grant.
2. Using public funding to harness university contributions to government priorities, such as the UK's national security, clean energy transition and transforming the NHS.
3. Removing government-imposed costs and barriers to greater efficiency, helping universities to help themselves by removing barriers on VAT and the Teachers' Pension Scheme, and dropping the planned tax on universities' international fee income, which would further damage university financial stability.

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

The value of Loyalty: how modern universities create local skills ecosystems to drive local economic growth

Modern universities play a pivotal role in shaping regional prosperity by anchoring talent, skills and innovation in their local areas. MillionPlus' report *The Value of Loyalty* demonstrates how these institutions generate and retain local graduates who contribute directly to the economic health of their communities.

A key finding is the prevalence of “loyal” graduates — those who are from a region, study in that region, and then go on to work there. Around 48% of graduates from modern universities in England are loyal, compared with just 26% from older (pre-92) institutions. These help bridge regional skills gaps and support local economies.

The report highlights examples of universities collaborating with local employers, public services, and government bodies to co-design courses, address workforce shortages, and tailor programmes to regional need. In particular, modern universities supply a large share of graduates in public service workforces — such as nursing, teaching and allied health — and work in partnership with local health boards and councils.

Despite these strengths, the report warns that financial pressures, policy volatility, and underrecognition of regional role pose risks to sustainability. It calls on government and stakeholders to empower modern universities as central actors in regional skills planning, to invest in stable funding, and to value loyalty in policymaking.

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