



The All-Party Parliamentary **University Group**

University APPG weekly update

17 – 21 April 2023

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:

Tom Lewis | appug@universitiesuk.ac.uk | 0207 419 5424

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

Contents

Parliamentary business	4
Education Oral Questions	4
Research and development funding and Horizon Europe – Westminster Hall debate	5
Lords Industry and Regulators Committee ‘the work of the OfS’	7
Commons Science and Technology Committee – Nurse, Grant and Tickell Reviews and Horizon Europe	8
Urgent Question on Chinese Police Stations in the UK	11
Forthcoming business	12
Lords Industry and Regulators Committee ‘the work of the OfS’	12
Office for Students – Westminster Hall debate	12
Commons Recess	12
Written Questions	13
Innovation and Science: Trade Promotion	13
Medicine: Higher Education	13
Students: Finance	14
Visas: Overseas Students	15
Students: Mexico	15
Overseas Students: Visas	16
Higher Education: Research	16
Sector News	17
UCU latest ballot outcome	17
International student population in England and Wales – Census 2021	17
British Academy launches new Strategic Plan for 2023-27	18
OIA publishes Annual Report for 2022	18
Russell Group– delivering skills for future growth report	19
UCAS Journey to a Million publications	20



Parliamentary business

Education Oral Questions

On Monday 17 April, the Secretary of State for Education, Rt Hon Gillian Keegan MP, and her ministerial team answered oral questions in the House of Commons.

Peter Aldous MP (Conservative) welcomed the Lifelong Loan Entitlement (LLE) and the government's acknowledgment of the need for maintenance support in its response to the consultation. He called for a clear pathway for those that did not have Level 3 qualification to participate. In her reply, the Secretary of State said that Level 3 courses were fully funded for a range of individuals through a variety of streams. She said that the government supported learners to 'build up' LLE funded modules on pathways to full qualifications.

Stephen Metcalfe MP (Conservative) asked what ambitions the Secretary of State had for the LLE and when they would be introduced. The Secretary of State said the LLE would be introduced in the academic year 2025/26 and 'radically transform' opportunity and meet the skills need.

Seema Malhotra MP (Labour) noted the decline in adult learning since 2010 and asked the Secretary of State to support reform of the apprenticeship levy. The Secretary of State highlighted the government's reforms to the skills systems which had worked with employers to address skills needs.

Matt Western MP, Shadow Minister for Higher Education, raised the £5 million reduction in funding for LLE preparation. He asked how the sector could be expected to deliver the reforms without the necessary funding. The Secretary of State acknowledged the 'big change' and said she was engaging with stakeholders to inform policy development.

David Johnston MP (Conservative) asked what measures the government were taking to ensure that disadvantaged students receive their 'fair share' of degree apprenticeships. Rt Hon Robert Halfon MP, Minister for Skills, Apprenticeships, and Higher Education, said career advice was targeting disadvantaged students and the Office for Students (OfS) had asked higher education providers to increase the proportion of Level 4, 5 and degree apprenticeships.

Siobhan Baillie MP (Conservative) asked whether the Minister would consider a new national campaign to raise awareness of degree apprenticeships. In his reply, the Minister highlighted the need for good communication and cited the '[Skills for Life](#)' national campaign. He reiterated previous remarks on improving career advice to encourage more learners through the degree apprenticeship route.

Jim Shannon MP (DUP) raised the importance of access to degree apprenticeships and asked what steps the Minister was taking to address the gender imbalance. The Minister said he wanted to encourage more female degree apprenticeships, particularly those on STEM courses.

During topical questions, John McNally MP (SNP) raised the significant social and economic contribution of international students and asked the Minister to confirm he would not restrict international student recruitment. In his reply, the Minister confirmed that the targets of the International Education Strategy remained and clarified that issues relating to visas were a matter for the Home Office.

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

Research and development funding and Horizon Europe – Westminster Hall debate

On Tuesday 18 April, 'Research and Development Funding and Horizon Europe' was debated in Westminster Hall. This debate was tabled by Paul Blomfield MP (Labour).

Paul Blomfield opened the debate by describing universities and the research they conduct as 'world leading.' He highlighted the role universities play in growing the economy, developing innovative solutions, and promoting the UK on an international stage. He outlined partnerships that universities had with companies such as Boeing and Rolls Royce, as well as SMEs. He described participation in Horizon Europe as 'vital' for the development of such partnerships.

Daniel Zeichner MP (Labour) and Philip Dunne MP (Conservative) both made interventions on the collaboration that Horizon Europe facilitated. Daniel Zeichner asked whether UK science and research would be 'poorer' without such collaboration and Philip Dunne explained how collaboration allowed the UK research community to compete with the US and China.

Paul Blomfield described Horizon Europe as the ‘single largest collaborative research programme in the world’ and noted that alternatives could not compete with this. He said the UK received €7 billion in research funding between 2014 and 2020 and the programme offered unrivalled access to a ‘ready-made’ collaborative funding scheme. He further described the loss to international and domestic talent if the UK did not associate to Horizon Europe, citing research from the Royal Society that found the UK lost at least one in six UK-based researchers who were awarded flagship Horizon Europe grants.

On the Pioneer alternative, Paul Blomfield said there were ‘too many unanswered questions.’ He described how funding under Pioneer would be subject to spending reviews which would make researchers lose confidence. On the net contribution, Paul Blomfield said he was cautious that researchers would receive more funding under Pioneer than Horizon, as the government had claimed. He said the government’s record in replacing EU funding was ‘not great’, citing the 43% cut in UK shared prosperity funding (UKSPF). On the role of the European Research Council, he questioned how it would be possible to collaborate if the UK was reduced to third party status.

Margaret Greenwood MP (Labour) described participation in Horizon Europe as being ‘vital’ to UK universities. She read out a statement issued by Universities UK (UUK) that called for Horizon Europe association to be a ‘core part of the future relationship between the EU and the UK’. She read similar statements from the Campaign for Science and Engineering (CaSE) and the Russell Group. She asked the Minister to confirm that the government were (i) listening to voices from the sector and (ii) committed to association with Horizon Europe.

Rachael Maskell MP (Labour) described the US Inflation Reduction Act as ‘dwarfing the global community’. She said the government was failing to realise the potential of UK R&D in comparison. She echoed previous remarks on the positive investment and collaboration that Horizon Europe facilitated. On Pioneer, she said this would not deliver the ‘scale, connectivity, and research interfaces’ required by the research community.

Andy Slaughter MP (Labour) raised the example of Imperial College London and its reliance on Horizon Europe. He explained how UK universities have ‘high impact science and innovation networks’ which were at risk if the UK did not associate with Horizon Europe. He said universities were doing everything they could but required the government to have a vision and understanding to match this.

Owen Thompson MP (SNP) described the long history of scientific and technological discovery in Scotland and cited the positive work of the Midlothian Science Zone in his constituency. He explained how a constituent had been disqualified from research funding due to the UK not being associated with Horizon Europe. He further highlighted the ‘devastating impact’ of Brexit on the recruitment of international students with a sharp drop in the number of EU students coming to Scotland.

Stephen Doughty MP (Labour) highlighted the reality on the ground for researchers. He said he had met with representatives of Universities Wales who shared their concern over Horizon Europe funding and the failure to replace European Structural and Investment funds. He proceeded to explain the importance of building regional economies and growing R&D outside the South-East. On Pioneer, he said it did not match the ‘funding, prestige, influence, or range’ of Horizon Europe.

Responding on behalf of the government, Paul Scully MP, Minister for Tech and the Digital Economy, celebrated the performance of the UK in research and development, noting that the UK has four of the world’s top universities. He noted the creation of the Department for Science, Innovation, and Technology and the government’s plan to ‘cement’ the UK’s position as a science and technology superpower by 2030. He reiterated the government’s commitment to increase public expenditure on R&D to £20 billion by 2024-25.

On Horizon Europe, the Minister confirmed it was the government’s preference to associate with Horizon Europe and said they had heard the voices of the science and research community. He qualified this by saying that association needed to represent a ‘good deal’ for the UK’s researchers, businesses, and taxpayers. The Minister described Pioneer as a ‘bold, ambitious alternative to Horizon Europe’ and said they would be seeking further input from researchers and businesses on the proposals. He confirmed the UK would invest approximately £14.6 billion in Pioneer to the end of 2027-28.

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

Lords Industry and Regulators Committee ‘the work of the OfS’

On Tuesday 18 April, the Lords Industry and Regulators Committee continued their inquiry into ‘the work of the OfS’. The committee heard evidence from Chloe Field (Vice President for Higher Education at the National Union of Students), Martha Longdon (Former Chair at OfS Student Panel), and Francesco Mascala (Former member at OfS Student Panel).

The committee probed the witnesses on how the OfS engaged students and whether student input played a meaningful role in the OfS' work. The witnesses suggested that the OfS student panel rarely had an impact on OfS policy with issues repeatedly discussed in panel meetings not prompting wider work. Martha Longdon noted that the majority of students did not see work on freedom of speech as a priority, while work on issues of greater interest to students, such as value for money, were not pursued. Francesco Mascala said the student panel felt like a 'tick box' exercise rather than a meaningful forum.

The witnesses were also asked on the extent to which the OfS' view of the student interest and the value for money of higher education were driven by political priorities. Martha Longdon felt that the board did not do enough to push back on the Department for Education position that value for money should be assessed using only output measures. She highlighted that the panel had repeatedly emphasised the importance of the wider student experience in understanding value for money. The witnesses further claimed that 'political interests, rather than the true interests of students, often came first' in the priorities of the OfS. The fact that the Chair of the OfS was a member of a political party was raised as eroding the perception that the OfS was an independent regulator.

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

Commons Science and Technology Committee – Nurse, Grant and Tickell Reviews and Horizon Europe

On Wednesday 19 April, the House of Commons Science and Technology Committee hosted a one-off evidence session on the Grant, Nurse and Tickell reviews into the UK R&D system, and Horizon Europe.

The first session heard evidence from two of the review's commissioned authors, Professor Adam Tickell (Vice Chancellor of the University of Birmingham and UUK Board Member) and Sir Paul Nurse (Director of the Francis Crick Institute). This session considered the organisational landscape for research, development, and innovation, as well as research bureaucracy.

The second session featured evidence from Sir Adrian Smith (President at Royal Society), Professor Dame Ottoline Leyser (Chief Executive at UKRI), and Professor Irene Tracey (Vice Chancellor at the University of Oxford and appearing on behalf of Universities UK).

The witnesses were asked about their expectations of a deal on Horizon and any implications on joining the lifecycle two years late. All three witnesses responded saying that they were positive that a deal could be struck on association and that there was consensus that it was the best option for the UK. Sir Adrian Smith said he was heartened by the personal commitment of the new Department for Science, Innovation, and Technology (DSIT) and Secretary of State, Rt Hon Michelle Donelan MP. He also noted the Prime Minister had recently responded to the letter from him and other Nobel prize winners, confirming his preference for association. Professor Tracey welcomed the explicit mention in Pioneer that the government's preference was still to associate.

On the impact of not being associated for two years, Professor Tracey reflected on her experience from Oxford, where she had seen a reduction in grant income due to the lack of clarity. She said that institutions with an excellent research base, such as the University of Oxford, could get back up to capacity at pace once association was secured. Dame Ottoline highlighted the UKRI guarantee and said that it had been working effectively. While uncertainty and anxiety around lack of association had caused a 'chilling effect', she said this would lift quickly once association was secured.

Aaron Bell MP (Conservative) asked about roadblocks for an agreement and cited a potential fear of having to reopen the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA). Sir Adrian said this would be a "stupid" complication, adding that Horizon Europe association could be achieved without reopening the TCA.

Asked about timelines for an agreement, Sir Adrian Smith suggested there could already be a timeline in place, as the guarantee ended in June 2023. Professor Tracey said association as soon as possible would be beneficial and added that it would be helpful to resolve the issue by the start of the academic year.

Tracey Crouch MP (Conservative) asked why Pioneer had broadly been welcomed, when association was the priority. Dame Ottoline said it was vital to have an alternative in place. She welcomed the prospectus's focus on R&D as a critical policy to support the future of the UK and many of the strands would be applicable either way. Professor Tracey added that it was important not to interpret the relief of Pioneer being in place with a reflection of preference. Her overall view on Pioneer was that it was great to see the government's commitment for the UK to maintain and grow its scientific excellence. On the pillars, these were described as straight forward and obvious, however, there were questions around the funding elements on the infrastructure pillar.

On the level of consultation regarding Pioneer, Dame Ottoline said with the publication of the prospectus, they were now able to conduct wider consultation with the community. Sir Adrian added that Horizon would be very hard to replicate, and the tone of Pioneer had underestimated the implementation difficulties of any alternatives.

On preparedness to roll out alternatives, Dame Ottoline highlighted that UKRI would be the main delivery body for Pioneer and said it would be challenging to roll out the breadth of the programme instantly. She noted that some of the core parts of Pioneer were evolutions of existing schemes and would be able to get up and running quicker, however, some bigger ‘moonshot’ elements would take longer. Professor Tracey added that the sector was adaptable, however, her immediate concern from a non-association scenario would be the ‘brain drain problem’.

Professor Tracey said there was a need for a “root and branch” review of university funding, in order to maintain the R&D talent pipeline, and for universities to continue to support the economy and the research endeavour. This was at risk from the model that relies on cross subsidies from international student fee income. She said this was echoed by former Director of the LSE, Baroness Minouche Shafik and other university leaders she had spoken to since becoming Vice-Chancellor of Oxford in January 2023. Rt Hon Greg Clark MP (Conservative), Chair of the Committee, highlighted that there had been three reviews into HE funding in recent years and suggested that another review, which could take years, may not be needed to decide this. Professor Tracey agreed that action was better than reports, but that after a pandemic and Brexit, it was a suitable time to think about funding for the HE sector, and that R&D funding was inherently linked to this.

Dame Ottoline noted the debate on agility of funding and said that currently it was difficult to prioritise with so many different opportunities arising. She said the main issue was how research budgets were annualised which did not reflect the nature of research. She said that if the UK was serious about a future built on R&I, we needed long term stability through legislation.

Carol Monaghan cited Royal Society figures on international comparisons regarding the visa system and asked whether the UK was in a strong position to attract international talent. Sir Adrian Smith replied that the problem was an inconsistent tone and different signals from government on immigration, and particularly on whether to restrict international students. He said this ran entirely counter to what we needed to signal to make the UK a magnet for global talent. Explaining the Royal Society figures, he outlined that it was six times as expensive to bring a family to the UK than the Netherlands for a researcher.

The panel were also asked to reflect on the recent reviews into R&D. Professor Tracey spoke about the existing regulatory burden placed on universities and she welcomed the Lords Industry and Regulators Committee inquiry into the functioning of the Office for Students (OfS). She welcomed a more cluster-based approach for university research and further highlighted the importance of the technical support staff who enabled high-quality research to happen.

Graham Stringer MP (Labour) concluded the session by asking witnesses about their engagement with DSIT. Professor Tracey said that the sector had achieved good engagement with DSIT through the conduit of UUK and Russell Group. Her main concerns were around engagement with the OfS, particularly on the style of engagement, which she said spoke to issues around overregulation.

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

Urgent Question on Chinese Police Stations in the UK

On Wednesday 19 April, the Shadow Home Secretary, Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP, tabled an urgent question requesting the Home Secretary to ‘make a statement on secret police stations operated in the UK by the Chinese Communist Party.’

During the urgent question, Catherine West MP, Shadow Minister for Asia and the Pacific, asked what specific measures higher education institutions would be encouraged to take to protect international students that felt under surveillance. In his reply, the Minister for Crime, Policing, and Fire, Rt Hon Chris Philip MP said that international students at UK universities should be free from intimidation. He further noted that the Minister for Security, Rt Hon Tom Tugendhat MP, would write to Catherine West outlining what measures he was taking with the Department for Education to ensure the safety of students on campuses.

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

Forthcoming business

Lords Industry and Regulators Committee ‘the work of the OfS’

On Tuesday 25 April, the Lords Industry and Regulators Committee will continue their inquiry into ‘the work of the OfS.’ The committee will take evidence from:

- 10:30:
 - o Anthony McClaran (Chair at GuildHE)
- 11:30:
 - o Vicki Scott (CEO at Quality Assurance Agency)
 - o Professor Simon Gaskell (Chair at Quality Assurance Agency)

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

Office for Students – Westminster Hall debate

On Wednesday 26 April from 4:30pm, the ‘Office for Students’ will be debated in Westminster Hall. This debate has been tabled by Emma Hardy MP (Labour).

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

Commons Recess

The House of Commons will rise for May Day recess on Thursday 27 April and return on Tuesday 2 May.

Written Questions

Innovation and Science: Trade Promotion

Preet Kaur Gill: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps his Department is taking to fund and promote UK (a) science and innovation and (b) universities through its support to multilateral partnerships [UIN 177768].

Andrew Mitchell: The UK's overseas Science & Innovation Network has 129 officers in over 65 locations who identify opportunities to build, support and nurture international collaboration between UK institutions and overseas academia, industry, government, and multilaterals.

UK universities are funded directly by the FCDO in line with government procurement rules, including through open competition. In financial year 2020/21, the latest year for which figures are available, 108 UK research institutions were in receipt of FCDO R&D funding. This funding supports universities and innovators across the whole of the UK to undertake research and form international partnerships.

Medicine: Higher Education

Lord Jackson of Peterborough: To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to increase the number of places available at UK universities to study medicine to match demand from applicants. [UIN HL7074]

Lord Markham: The Government has funded an additional 1,500 undergraduate medical school places per year for domestic students in England, which represents a 25% increase and takes the total number of medical school places in England to 7,500 each year. This expansion was completed in September 2020 and delivered five new medical schools in England.

In addition, the Government temporarily lifted the cap on medical school places for students who completed A-Levels in 2020 and in 2021 and who had an offer from a university in England to study medicine, subject to their grades. As a result of this change, the intakes for 2020/21 and 2021/22 were 8,405 and 8,460 respectively, significantly above the planned cap of 7,500.

NHS England has been commissioned to produce a Long Term Workforce Plan. The Government has committed to publishing the plan shortly, and this will include projections for the number of doctors, nurses and other professionals that will be needed in five, 10 and 15 years' time, taking full account of improvements in retention and productivity. The workforce plan is for the whole of the National Health Service workforce.

Students: Finance

Julian Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to reform student finance. [UIN 174341]

Robert Halfon: The government announced that it will introduce a Lifelong Loan Entitlement (LLE) from 2025 to provide a streamlined funding system for provision across levels 4 to 6. The LLE will enable people to train, retrain, and upskill to meet the needs of the economy and advance their careers.

The LLE will provide individuals with a loan entitlement to the equivalent of four years of post-18 education to use over their working lives (for example £37,000 in today's fees). It will be available for both full years of study at higher technical and degree levels, and, for the first time, for modules of high-value courses, regardless of whether they are provided in colleges or universities.

Loans for living costs and targeted grants will be available in respect of all designated courses under the LLE, including part-time courses, subject to need.

Under this flexible skills system, people will be able to space out their studies and learn at a pace that is right for them, including choosing to build up their qualifications over time within both further education and higher education (HE) providers. They will have a choice in how and when they study to acquire new life-changing skills.

The government has legislated through the Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022 on the LLE. On 1 February 2023, building on these measures, it introduced the HE (Lifelong Learning) Fee Limits Bill as a further step towards delivery of the LLE from 2025.

As part of the pathway towards the LLE, as of the start of the 2022/23 academic year, the government began trialling loan-funded access to tuition fees for designated short courses at levels 4 to 6 at 22 providers across England through the HE Short Course trial, which tests a more flexible approach to funding learning at levels 4 to 6.

On 7 March 2023, the government published its response to the LLE consultation, providing a detailed conclusion to the consultation and a clear description of the key changes being brought in as part of the LLE.

Visas: Overseas Students

Wera Hobhouse: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what guidance her Department provides to international students with Tier 4 visas who wish to switch from a student visa to a dependant visa based on their spouse's Tier 2 skilled worker visa. [UIN 175619]

Robert Jenrick: Skilled Worker dependants can study, subject to the ATAS requirement, and guidance on applying as a Skilled Worker dependant is here: www.gov.uk/skilled-worker-visa/your-partner-and-children (opens in a new tab)

A migrant cannot hold permission as a student and as a dependant at the same time. They will need to decide which type of permission is more suitable for them.

A migrant's visa status will not affect their status as a student with regard to financial sponsorship and bursaries. The continued eligibility for those depends on the terms and conditions of the specific schemes and is a matter for the student and scholarship/bursary provider to discuss between them.

Students: Mexico

Dan Carden: To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, whether she has had recent discussions with her Mexican counterpart on taking steps to facilitate student exchanges between UK and Mexican students. [UIN 176746]

Nigel Huddleston: The Secretary of State met with her Mexican counterpart in Mexico City in February. Discussions focused on boosting trade and investment between the United Kingdom and Mexico through the UK's accession to CPTPP and a new free trade agreement. Facilitating student exchange was not a topic of discussion. However, I am pleased to note that the UK Government's outward student mobility scheme which was launched in 2021, the Turing Scheme, has already successfully enabled funded organisations to send more than 800 UK students on placements to study and work in Mexico.

Overseas Students: Visas

John McNally: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for the Home Department on the potential impact of international student visa restrictions on the higher education sector. [UIN 904516]

Gillian Keegan: The department works closely with the Home Office on a range of issues, including on matters relating to international student visas. The government keeps all immigration policies under constant review to ensure they best serve the country and reflect the public's priorities.

International students make a significant economic and cultural contribution to the UK's higher education sector, and I am proud to have met our International Education Strategy ambition to attract at least 600,000 international students for the second consecutive year.

Higher Education: Research

Lord Alton of Liverpool: To ask His Majesty's Government whether any UK academic institutions have been notified that they will lose access to research databases provided by the China National Knowledge Infrastructure platform; and what assessment they have made of extent to which academic institutions in China currently have access to academic research databases funded by UK research councils. [UIN HL7052]

Viscount Camrose: The Department does not collect data on institutional subscriptions to the China National Knowledge Infrastructure platform.

The UK is a global leader in open research. UK Research & Innovation (UKRI) support the principle that research data and publications are as open as possible and as secure as necessary. Responsible and trusted research requires a balance of considerations which are expressed in the UK Research and Innovation Trusted Research and Innovation Principles, published in 2021. Science outcomes published in Research Councils' open research databases are available to all subscribers.

Sector News

UCU latest ballot outcome

On Monday 17 April, the University and College Union (UCU) declared a 'historic victory' after members voted by 85% to proceed with pension proposals agreed with employers. In the pay and conditions dispute, UCU members voted by 56% to reject proposals agreed with employers.

UCU general secretary Jo Grady said: 'UCU members in their tens of thousands have voted overwhelmingly to move forward with pension proposals agreed with employers which will pave the way for the restoration of benefits... In the pay and conditions dispute, UCU members at 145 universities will now prepare to begin a marking and assessment boycott on 20 April.'

In response to UCU's latest ballot outcome, Raj Jethwa, Chief Executive of the Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA), said: 'The outcome of UCU's latest consultative ballot is disappointing but not surprising, given UCU's recommendation to reject the proposals. Nonetheless, there is much for the UCU to now consider, given the split in the membership. The fact that under a third of UCU's membership voted to reject suggests that many understand the financial pressures facing the sector, as well as the positive progress made in the pay dispute.'

You can read [UCU's statement](#) and [UCEA's response](#) here.

International student population in England and Wales – Census 2021

On Monday 17 April, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) released data on the international student population for England and Wales.

Key findings include:

- There were 2,463,000 people aged 18 years and over in full-time education. Of this overall total, 70.7% were UK-born, 9.7% were EU-born and 19.6% were non-EU-born.

- Of the international student population in England and Wales, Middle East and Asia-born were the largest group (40.2%). This was followed by EU14 (15.9%), Africa (12.4%), and EU2 (11.7%).
- A third of the international student population were in London (127,000, 33.9%), while the wider population was more evenly distributed. The South East (45,000, 12.0%) and the West Midlands (35,000, 9.4%) were the regions with the highest populations of international students outside London.

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

British Academy launches new Strategic Plan for 2023-27

On Tuesday 18 April, the British Academy launched its new Strategic Plan for 2023 to 2027, setting out its vision of putting the humanities and social sciences at the heart of understanding the world and shaping a brighter future.

The Academy has identified three strategic priorities for the next four years:

- Strengthening and championing the humanities and social sciences.
- Mobilising disciplines for the benefit of everyone.
- Opening up the Academy.

Professor Julia Black, President of the British Academy, commented: ‘This strategic plan sets out how over the next four years we want to strengthen knowledge and insights into peoples and societies across time and place and to share them widely with others so that people around the world can learn, progress and prosper wisely.’

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

OIA publishes Annual Report for 2022

On Thursday 20 April, the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) published their Annual Report for 2022.

Key findings include:

- They received 2,850 new complaints in 2022, 3% more than in 2021 (2,763).

- 25% of cases were Justified (3%), Partly Justified (7%), or settled in favour of the student (15%). This is slightly lower than in 2021 but comparable to previous years.
- Students received a total of £667,816 through settlement agreements.

Ben Elger, Chief Executive of the OIA, said: ‘2022 was again a complex and challenging year in our external environment. We worked extensively with others in the regulatory landscape to contribute to thinking around relevant policy developments including free speech legislation, to help promote a joined-up approach and a focus on key issues affecting students.’

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

Russell Group– delivering skills for future growth report

On Thursday 20 April, the Russell Group published a new report titled ‘Education and Skills for Growth’. This showcases how Russell Group universities work with local, national and international partners to ensure their courses are responding to the changing needs of the economy, employers and skills gaps in their local regions.

The report covers four broad themes:

- Delivering education accessible to all.
- Specialising in research-intensive education.
- Addressing skills gaps to deliver economic growth.
- Creating a supportive environment for students.

Dr Tim Bradshaw, Chief Executive of the Russell Group, said: ‘Our vision for the future of education is ambitious: we will create academically stretching courses informed by the latest research and expertise, with increasingly flexible learning opportunities that meet the needs of graduates, employers and the wider economy.’

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

UCAS Journey to a Million publications

On Thursday 20 April, the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) published new contributions to their national debate on the Journey to a Million.

The Journey to a Million project comes in response to projections that there could be up to a million higher education applicants in a single year in 2030. This will affect all aspects of how people gain a place in higher education, from the point they consider their options, to the way they connect to them, to their experiences whilst studying and entering the labour market.

The latest publications are:

- Dr Stephen Coulter, Head of Industrial Strategy, Skills and Sustainability, Tony Blair Institute for Global Change and James Scales, Policy Lead, Skills and Future of Work, Tony Blair Institute for Global Change on 'With the target set in 1999 of 50% of young people now participating in higher education, where next for the UK HE sector and economy?'
- Rt Hon. Lord Willetts FRS, President of the Resolution Foundation and Former Minister for Universities and Science on 'What does the Journey to a Million mean for the funding of future provision?'
- Dr Jo Saxton, Chief regulator, Office for Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) on 'What does the Journey to a Million mean for the assessment of qualifications and qualification outcomes?'
- Chris Hale, former Director of Policy, Universities UK (UUK) on 'What does the Journey to a Million mean for teaching provision and university facilities?'
- Pat Carvalho, Principal, Birmingham Metropolitan College (BMET) on 'What can the higher education sector learn from the growth in demand that is being experienced within the school and college sector?'
- Dr Anthony Manning, Director and Dean of Global Lifelong Learning, University of Kent on 'How can continued innovation in higher education help us meet national and international demand?'
- Professor Nicola Dandridge, Professor of Higher Education Policy, University of Bristol on 'What does the Journey to a Million mean for the nature of competition in higher education?'

- Mike Nicholson, Director of Recruitment, Admissions and Participation, University of Cambridge on 'What does the Journey to a Million mean for a more competitive admissions landscape?'
- Joy Elliott-Bowman, Director of Policy and Development, Independent Higher Education (IHE) on 'How can diversifying providers help meet the challenge of the Journey to a Million?'

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