



# All-Party Parliamentary University Group

## Weekly update

**17 – 21 March 2025**

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

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# Parliamentary business

## **Financing and Scaling UK Science and Technology inquiry launched – HoL Science and Technology Committee**

On Thursday 20 March, the House of Lords Science and Technology Committee announced that they have launched an inquiry into Financing and Scaling UK Science and Technology: Innovation, Investment, Industry.

They will be exploring why the UK “can struggle to translate” its strengths in research, development and innovation into UK-based companies and economic growth.

You can [read more](#).

## **Social Mobility Policy – HoL Social Mobility Committee oral evidence**

On Thursday 20 March from 10:00am, the House of Lords Social Mobility Committee heard oral evidence from:

- Professor Liz Mossop, Vice Chancellor at Sheffield Hallam University
- Professor Kathryn Mitchell, Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive at University of Derby
- Professor Graeme Atherton, Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Regional Engagement at University of West London
- Professor Anna Mountford-Zimdars, Centre for Social Mobility at The University of Exeter
- Professor Stephen Machin, Professor of Economics at London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE)
- Dr Louise Ashley, Associate Professor and Fellow at Queen Mary University of London

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

## **Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (Transfer of Functions) Bill (Fourth sitting) – HoC**

On Thursday 20 March, the Institute of Apprenticeships and Technical Education (Transfer of Functions) Bill had its fourth sitting. New clause 5, *Report on the impact on Higher Education*, was discussed.

Neil O’Brien (Con) argued that the Bill is crucial to the survival of higher apprenticeships. He highlighted the many benefits of level 7 apprenticeships, including that they allow students to earn while they learn, give employers the freedom to shape higher education to their needs, and are crucial to the NHS workforce pipeline.

He also talked about the financial pressure universities are under, and the detrimental impact that axing level 6 & 7 apprenticeships would have on institutions that attract people who don’t traditionally go to university. He asked for reassurance from the Minister that she had considered the impact of level 7 funding on universities income.

Janet Daby (Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education) responded that the Government are tilting apprenticeships toward ‘young people in most need of developing skills and getting a foot on the career ladder’. She acknowledged the important role of HEPs in the skills landscape and sought to reassure O’Brien that higher education will play an important role in the aims of Skills England.

You can [read the transcript](#).

# Forthcoming business

## Further education and skills – HoC Education Committee oral evidence

On Tuesday 25 March at 10.00am the House of Commons Education Committee will hear evidence from:

- Darren Hankey, Principal and CEO of Hartlepool College of Further Education at Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL)
- Robert Nitsch CBE, Chief Executive at Federation of Awarding Bodies
- Alice Gardner, Chief Executive at Edge Foundation
- David Robinson, Director of Post 16 and Skills at Education Policy Institute
- Bill Watkin CBE, Chief Executive at Sixth Form Colleges Association
- Mr Imran Tahir, Research Economist at Institute for Fiscal Studies
- Jo Grady, General Secretary at University and College Union
- Mr Imran Tahir, Research Economist at Institute for Fiscal Studies

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

## Financing and Scaling UK Science and Technology – HoL Science and Technology Committee oral evidence

On Tuesday 25 March at 10.15am, the House of Lords Science and Technology Committee will hear evidence from:

- Dr Richard Jones, Professor of Materials Physics and Innovation at University of Manchester
- Dr Alicia Greated, Executive Director at Campaign for Science and Engineering (CaSE)
- Jakob Mokander, Director of Science and Technology Policy at Tony Blair Institute
- Julia Willemyns, Co-Director at UK Day One

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

## Export led growth – HoC Business and Trade Committee oral evidence

On Tuesday 25 March at 2.30pm the House of Commons Business and Trade Committee will hear evidence from:

- Charlie Humphreys, Director of Corporate Affairs at Asia House
- Ian Gibbons OBE, Chief Executive Officer at UK ASEAN Business Council
- Douglas Barrie, Senior Fellow for Military Aerospace at International Institute for Strategic Studies
- Nicola Watkinson, Managing Director, International at TheCityUK
- Harry Anderson, Head of Policy and Global Engagement at Universities UK
- Johanna Kyrklund, Global Chief Investment Officer at Schroders
- Helen Brocklebank, Chief Executive Officer at Walpole
- Mr Jonathan Brenton, Director of Public Affairs at Pernod Ricard
- Alex Gover, Head of Business Development at Intralink

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

## **Spring Statement 2025**

On Wednesday 26 March 2025, the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) will [publish revised forecasts for the economy and public finances](#). The Chancellor will respond to the forecast in her [Spring Statement](#) in the House of Commons and potentially make announcements around spending and taxation.

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

## **Department for Science, Innovation and Technology – oral questions**

On Wednesday 26 March at 11.30am, the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology will answer oral questions.

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

# Written questions and statements

## Lifelong Education

**Sharon Hodgson MP:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what support she plans to provide to the Office for Students to (a) allow more providers to complete the registration process for the Lifelong Learning Entitlement and (b) support additional applications from small specialist providers who receive educational oversight from Ofsted for eligible Level 5 and 6 provision. [UIN 36618]

**Janet Daby MP:** The government is committed to delivering the Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE) as set out in the Autumn Budget statement in October 2024. From the LLE's launch in January 2027, the Office for Students (OfS) will regulate all providers offering LLE-funded provision.

The OfS has made clear that it expects to restart work on registrations, degree awarding powers and university titles in August 2025, although the changes will remain under review until then. The department understands the OfS will keep providers updated throughout this period about its plans, including confirming application arrangements from August onwards. The government supports the reasons for the temporary pause so that the OfS can refocus its efforts on provider financial sustainability. As the independent regulator, it is for the OfS to process registrations in the manner it deems most appropriate.

The government will continue to engage closely with the OfS and providers to support timely transition arrangements for the launch of the LLE. The government, together with the OfS, will provide further information on the regulation of providers under the LLE in spring 2025.

## Overseas Students: Ukraine

**Will Forster MP:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether Ukrainian students will be eligible for home fee status from the 2025-26 academic year. [UIN 37496]

**Janet Daby MP:** In the 2022/23 academic year, the Student Support Regulations were amended so that persons granted leave under one of the Ukraine schemes (Homes for Ukraine, Ukraine family scheme and Ukraine extension scheme) would qualify for student support and home fee status in England without requiring them to meet the three-year ordinary residence requirement.

Following the recent launch of the Ukraine Permission Extension Scheme (UPES), the regulations have been further updated from the 2024/25 academic year, so that those who have been granted leave under UPES will also qualify for student finance and home fee status in line with those granted leave under one of the other Ukraine schemes.

This ensures that Ukrainians who have been affected by the war in Ukraine can access support on the same basis as those within other protection-based categories, such as refugees.

## **Research: Finance**

**Lord Jackson of Peterborough:** To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) proposals in the "Guidance published for the People, Culture and Environment Pilot" published by UK Research and Innovation on 14 January; and what assessment they have made of the effect on scientific excellence, innovation and economic growth of introducing a 25 per cent weighting to EDI initiatives when allocating research funding.[UIN HL5508]

**Lord Vallance of Balham:** The People, Culture, and Environment (PCE) pilot aims to assess the feasibility of integrating PCE elements, to guide the development of the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2029. Government acknowledges the important role of a positive research culture in attracting and retaining diverse talent, which is essential for maintaining the UK's global competitiveness in research. Final decisions on REF 2029's structure, including any potential PCE weighting, will follow the pilot's conclusion and further sector consultation. While the proposed weighting for PCE is 25%, EDI initiatives only form a small proportion of this.



## Sector news

### **Curriculum and Assessment Review publishes interim findings – Department for Education**

On Wednesday 18 March, the Government-commissioned independent Curriculum and Assessment Review team published their initial findings and set out the next phase of work which will focus on four key areas. The report confirms that many aspects of the curriculum and assessment system are working well, but identifies four key areas needing improvement:

- Ensuring high standards for all - exploring how curriculum and assessment can be more inclusive and equitable, to ensure excellence for all.
- Addressing subject-specific challenges, and ensuring curriculum is consistently achieving depth and breadth – including an in-depth analysis of individual subjects to ensure appropriate depth and mastery of knowledge, and that subjects are cutting edge.
- Responding to social and technological change - examining how education can better prepare students to grasp the opportunities of the future, for example heightened digital skills and media literacy to address trends in digital information and the rise of AI, and scientific and cultural knowledge to meet the challenges of climate change.
- Ensuring pathways beyond GCSE work for all - examining the current pathways to ensure they work for all young people in supporting successful routes to further study or employment, especially those from less privileged backgrounds.

You can [read the report](#).

### **Unis Start Up the UK campaign – Universities UK**

On Thursday 20 March, Universities UK (UUK) launched a campaign to showcase student start-ups and the work universities are doing to support them. The campaign also aims to highlight the vital role these start-ups play in boosting economic growth nationally and locally by creating jobs and attracting investors, as well as how

universities are equipping entrepreneurs with the right skills through incubator hubs. UUK published new analysis showing the impact of university start-ups:

- Between 2014/15 to 2022/23 there was a 70% increase in the number of start-ups founded at UK universities
- In the 2022/23 academic year, 64,384 people were employed by these start-ups – up 177% since 2014/15
- New analysis has revealed that with the right support, by 2028, 27,000 new start-ups could be established by students and staff at UK universities supported by over 400 accelerators and 300 incubation hubs in universities in all parts of the country.
- University leaders warn UK risks becoming an ‘incubator economy’ and are calling on the government to act now so universities can continue to support start-ups to scale up in Britain

You can see the campaign [webpage](#) and [press release](#).

## **Boys will be boys: the educational underachievement of boys and men report – Nick Hillman and Mark Brooks OBE**

On Thursday 20 March, the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) published a new report, *Boys will be boys: The educational underachievement of boys and young men*. It was sponsored by Ulster University and authored by Nick Hillman, Director of HEPI, and Mark Brooks OBE, policy adviser on men’s health, education and domestic abuse. The report showed that the differences in educational achievement between men and women have meant half a million young men missing out on higher education over the past decade. It calls for a new approach, including “evaluating and expanding, including via seed-corn funding if necessary, proven grassroots initiatives aimed at raising the standard of boys’ education”.

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

## **Higher Education Student Statistics: UK 2023/24 released – HESA**

On Thursday 20 March, the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) released official statistics on students at UK higher education providers in the 2023/24 academic year. Key findings include:

- Total higher education student numbers in the UK fell in 2023/24 for the first time since 2014.
- The number of new entrants to higher education courses in the UK fell by 3% with entrant numbers falling for all levels of study except postgraduate research degrees.
- The number of entrants whose permanent address was outside the UK fell by 7% including a 36% fall in the number of new entrants from Nigeria. Numbers of new students from India fell by 15% and from China by 4%.
- A total of 1,053,060 higher education qualifications were awarded in 2023/24, exceeding one million for the first time.

You can [read more](#).