



The All-Party Parliamentary **University Group**

University APPG weekly update

20 – 24 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

Financial sustainability of universities in England – HoL oral question

On Tuesday 21 May, Lord Young of Cookham (Conservative) asked an oral question in the House of Lords: “To ask His Majesty’s Government what assessment they have made of the financial sustainability of universities in England”.

Minister for the School System and Student Finance, Baroness Barran, acknowledged that the financial position of universities was increasingly challenging and emphasised the need for institutions to adapt their business models. She noted that universities were independent entities responsible for managing their finances but highlighted government support through capital funding for STEM and NHS-related teaching and research.

Lord Young questioned the impact of government policies like the freeze on student fees and control over student visas on the financial health of universities. He cited a report from the Office for Students calling for a review of the funding model to maintain quality education.

Lord Grabiner (Crossbench) suggested raising the tuition fee cap, which has been stagnant, as a potential solution to financial pressures.

Lord Foulkes of Cumnock (Labour) and Baroness Royall of Blaisdon (Labour) raised concerns about the impact of visa policies on the ability of universities to attract international students, which are crucial for financial stability and international influence.

Baroness Barran defended the government’s stance, indicating that changes to visa policies were under careful consideration following a recent report by the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC).

Baroness Smith of Newnham (Liberal Democrat) and Lord Johnson of Marylebone (Conservative) highlighted the economic benefits of international students and warned that restrictive visa policies could harm universities and local economies. Baroness Barran reassured that the government recognises the value of international students and is proud of the successful International Education Strategy.



Lord Cromwell (Crossbench) inquired about the potential government response if a major university faced financial collapse. Baroness Barran indicated that larger universities are generally in good financial health but assured that the government would protect student interests if a university failed.

Baroness Andrews (Labour) emphasised the significant economic benefits that universities bring to local areas, particularly through international students, and questioned the impact of declining student numbers. Baroness Barran acknowledged that a reduction in funds would negatively affect these areas but highlighted ongoing government investment in skills and technology education to support local economies.

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

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, the House of Lords debated 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), Chair of the Committee.

Baroness Taylor of Bolton thanked the committee and staff for their hard work on the report, and highlighted the increasing challenges facing higher education, exacerbated by long-standing issues and recent events like the COVID-19 pandemic. She outlined the report's key findings before urging the government to address the current higher education crisis, clarify its stance on international student recruitment, and ensure the OfS's independence and efficacy.

Lord Johnson of Marylebone (Conservative) defended the OfS and its regulatory role in higher education, emphasising that many criticisms should be directed at government policy rather than the OfS itself. He highlighted the historical context of the OfS's creation, which shifted from a funding council to an independent market regulator focused on student interests. He acknowledged issues within the OfS but argued that it plays a crucial role in maintaining quality and accountability in the higher education sector. He criticised the Department for Education's handling of universities and suggested moving them to a different department for better alignment. He also called for the OfS to support innovation and lifelong learning more



effectively, stressing the need for a strong, trusted regulator to ensure the future success of the higher education system.

Lord Mann (Non-Affiliated) expressed concerns about the current consultation on draft regulatory advice related to the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023, set to be enacted on 1 August. He warned that the proposed guidelines might remove essential safeguards for Jewish students, potentially fostering anti-Semitism on university campuses. Lord Mann emphasised that such issues would undermine good campus relations, contravening universities' legal obligations. He criticised the OfS for not explicitly rejecting Holocaust denial, as previously promised by the government, and argued that the guidance could lead universities to revoke the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism, thereby weakening efforts to combat anti-Semitism. Lord Mann called for a fundamental rethink of the guidance, suggesting a pause in the enactment of the Act until these concerns are addressed. He offered his expertise to help reconcile government policy with the practical needs of universities to protect Jewish students and staff.

Lord Willetts (Conservative) highlighted the need for a clear, rules-based regulatory framework, noting that the former HEFCE model's discretionary nature was outdated. He said he supported the Office for Students (OfS) as necessary but criticised its lack of engagement with regulatory experts. Lord Willetts stressed the importance of transparency in student funding and information, arguing that current university fees cover more than just tuition. He called for innovative approaches in higher education and urged a shift in regulatory focus from prior attainment to value-added measures, similar to school assessments. Lord Willetts concluded by endorsing the report and advocating for the OfS's focus on meaningful data for prospective students.

Minister for the School System and Student Finance, Baroness Barran, expressed gratitude to Baroness Taylor and the Industry and Regulators Committee for their work on higher education and the Office for Students (OfS). She acknowledged insights from Lord Johnson and Lord Willetts on establishing an independent regulator focused on quality, competition, choice, and value for money, despite the structural challenges within government departments. Baroness Barran emphasised the OfS's independence, countering claims of excessive political influence, and highlighted its engagement efforts with students and providers, including new advisory panels and outreach initiatives. She noted the importance of sustainable funding and the Government's efforts to address financial pressures in the sector. Baroness Barran underscored the UK's world-class higher education system, the need for value-for-money metrics and the ongoing review of the OfS to ensure effective regulation and support for the sector.



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

Commercialising Research – Science, Innovation and Technology Committee oral evidence

On Wednesday 22 May, the House of Commons Science Innovation and Technology Committee held an oral evidence session as part of their new inquiry focused on ‘commercialising research.’

The session gained insights from CEOs and founders of science and technology start-up and spin-out companies as well research and technology agencies and catapult organisations. It examined the expertise and finance needed for companies to commercialise scientific research and whether the existing funding and support from government was effective.

The first panel consisted of Julian Hanak (CEO at Purespring Therapeutics) and Byron Dixon OBE (CEO at Micro-Fresh).

Topics in the first session included: international competition, attracting and retaining talent (e.g., specialist teaching at universities required to support the talent pool), academic expertise and infrastructure at universities (Aston University, University of Leicester, De Montfort University, University of Bristol, and the University of Oxford were all cited), and the university-business environment (increasing ‘commercial edge’ of university sector was mentioned).

The second panel consisted of Simon Andrews (Executive Director at Fraunhofer UK), Rosa Wilkinson (Director of Policy at High Value Manufacturing Catapult), and Dr David Wilkes (Director of Innovation Ecosystem at Innovate UK (UK Research and Innovation)).

Topics in the second session included: encouraging university-business collaboration (emphasis on increased dialogue, sharing best practice, and greater mutual understanding), practical ‘obstacles’ in bridging the gap between research and industry (expertise, infrastructure, awareness of support all mentioned), commercialisation at universities (importance of Innovate UK to identify exciting research at an early stage from universities), ways that Research and Technology Organisations were contributing to levelling-up, and government strategy (ensuring policies across departments were joined up was cited as a challenge).



You can [watch the session](#). A [transcript will be available](#) in due course.

DSIT – oral questions

On Wednesday 22 May, oral questions for the Department for Science Innovation and Technology (DSIT) took place in the House of Commons.

Michael Fabricant MP (Conservative) asked the Minister to praise the work of universities, including the University of Birmingham, Imperial College London and Loughborough University, that ‘go out of their way to attract women on to engineering courses.’ The Minister for Science, Research, and Innovation, Andrew Griffith MP, said the UK was ‘enormously blessed’ for the quality of its universities who were making ‘magnificent efforts’ in the diversity in STEM.

Chris Elmore MP (Labour) probed on the replacement for the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Chief Executive. He noted that the recruitment process normally lasted eight months and suggested that the government were speeding this process up due to concerns over the outcome of the general election. In his reply, the Minister said the government made ‘no apologies for cracking on with the process’ of filling the leadership position.

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

Prime Minister’s Questions

On Wednesday 22 May, the Prime Minister, Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP, answered questions in the House of Commons. During his exchange with the SNP Westminster Leader, Rt Hon Stephen Flynn MP, he was asked about the Graduate route:

Stephen Flynn MP: I was taken aback this week when a former Prime Minister spoke some sense. Alas, it was, indeed, David Cameron. What he said in relation to graduate route visas was that if any restrictions were implemented, it would lead to job losses, university closures and a reduction in research. Universities Scotland outlines that £5 billion of economic value is at risk. So, may I ask the Prime Minister: does he agree with the Foreign Secretary?

Prime Minister: The Foreign Secretary also said that the levels of legal migration to this country are too high. That is what I also believe, which is why it is right that we are taking decisive action to bring down the numbers. And



that plan is working. In the first three months of this year, the visas issued are down by 25% and migration is on its way to being returned to more sustainable levels. I appreciate that that is a point of difference between the right hon. Gentleman's party, and indeed the Labour party, and us. We believe that that level of migration needs to come down to more sustainable levels, so that we ease the pressure on public services. Everyone who comes to our country must contribute economically. That is the migration system that we will deliver.

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

Parliamentary wash-up

Following the announcement of the upcoming general election, there were two days of Parliamentary wash-up. Neither the Renters (Reform) Bill or Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill were prioritised for this. They will progress no further.

You can [read more about wash-up](#).





Forthcoming business

General election

The general election will take place on **Thursday 4 July**. Parliament will be prorogued on Friday 24 May, then dissolved on Thursday 30 May for the pre-election campaign period.



Written Questions

T-levels

Munira Wilson MP (Liberal Democrat): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an estimate of the number and proportion of courses per higher education provider that accept T-levels for entry standards. [UIN 25718]

Luke Hall MP (Conservative): T Levels set students up to progress onto a number of routes including employment, further education or higher education (HE). The government was delighted to see that last year, 97% of T Level students who applied for undergraduate study through UCAS received at least one offer. More information can be found here: <https://www.ucas.com/corporate/news-and-key-documents/news/79-uk-18-year-old-applicants-receiving-results-gain-place-first-choice-university>. Students secured places on a range of courses such as Midwifery, Computer Science and Architecture at a range of institutions.

The department has published a list of over 160 HE providers that have confirmed that they accept T Levels on at least one course. The list can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-providers-with-t-levels-in-entry-requirements>. This list is not exhaustive or an official register of all HE providers that accept T Levels and is updated as providers confirm that they accept T Levels. Given that HE providers are autonomous institutions that regularly review the entry requirements, the department recommends that students look at the UCAS website and the websites of higher education providers for more information on entry requirements for specific courses.

The department works closely with the HE sector to ensure providers understand the content and quality of T Levels. The department has published a range of resources to support HE providers at the following site: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/t-level-resources-for-universities>. The department has also published a range of resources for T Level providers who wish to support their students who are considering progressing into HE, which can be found here: <https://support.tlevels.gov.uk/hc/en-gb/articles/15892783337362-T-Levels-and-Higher-Education-Progression>.



Confucius Institutes

Andrew Western MP (Labour): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has discussions with (a) Cabinet colleagues and (b) universities on the future of Confucius Institutes. [UIN 25598]

Luke Hall MP (Conservative): The government takes seriously any concerns about overseas interference in the UK's higher education (HE) sector, including through Confucius Institutes, and regularly assesses the risks facing academia. The department has taken action to remove any direct or indirect government funding from Confucius Institutes in the UK, but currently judge that it would be disproportionate to ban them.

The department works closely with Cabinet colleagues and other government departments to support the HE sector. Most recently, the Deputy Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, and the Minister for Skills, Apprenticeships and Higher Education met a group of Vice Chancellors on 25 April to discuss research security in universities.

Alcoholic Drinks: Health Education

Rachael Maskell MP (Labour): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what information her Department holds on the number and proportion of providers of alcohol education in (a) schools and (b) higher education institutions in the last five years that received funding (i) directly and (ii) indirectly from the alcohol industry; and what the value was of contracts issued to providers that received such funding from the alcohol industry. [UIN 25882; Grouped Question: 25881]

Damian Hinds MP (Conservative): The department does not have any contracts with providers to provide education on alcohol in schools, colleges or universities, nor does the department hold information on providers of alcohol education in schools and higher education (HE) institutions.

The department does not direct schools on which resources, external speakers or organisations to use, and does not endorse or promote resources to schools other than those produced by other government departments.

It is for further education colleges to determine what material they use to support the health and wellbeing of students.



HE providers in England are autonomous and independent and they make decisions on the courses that they will run. In making these decisions, providers will adapt their offers to the interest of students and demand from employers. The department cannot therefore comment on their choices.

Research: Finance

Neil O'Brien MP (Conservative): To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to page 173 of the Levelling Up the United Kingdom White Paper, published the Government on 2 February 2022, what recent progress she has made on targeting at least 55% of domestic R&D funding outside the greater south east by 2024-25. [UIN 25955]

Andrew Griffith MP (Conservative): Following the establishment of DSIT, the department set the aim to invest, over the Spending Review period, a cumulative £1.3 billion more in R&D funding outside the Greater South East than in 2021-2022, superseding the referenced BEIS target.

DSIT and UKRI are working together to achieve this target, delivering the Innovation Accelerators programme to accelerate innovation clusters, investing £200 million in 12 projects across the UK through the Strength in Places Fund, by 2025, and in Autumn 2023 DSIT announced funding for a next-gen Exascale supercomputing facility in Edinburgh, and a new AI supercomputer for the national AI Research Resource in Bristol.

Carbon Emissions: Universities

Rebecca Long Bailey MP (Labour): To ask the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, with reference to the report by Key Cities Innovation Network entitled Civic partners in Net Zero, published in April 2024, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of local civic partnerships with universities in achieving net zero targets. [UIN 26483]

Justin Tomlinson MP (Conservative): The Government recognises that both local organisations and universities can, and do, play an important role in driving local action on net zero and is supportive of them working together to do so. We provide a range of support for Local areas to decarbonise, for example through our Local Net Zero Hubs which support local authorities to develop net zero projects and attract commercial investment.



Overseas Students: China

Baroness Bennett (Green): To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that Chinese students in UK universities, particularly those who are linked to China's military, are properly vetted and do not pose a threat to activists and people from Hong Kong based in UK universities who are campaigning against the actions of China and the Chinese Communist Party. [UIN HL4440]

Baroness Barran (Conservative): Higher education (HE) in the UK is recognised as world class and attracting the brightest students from around the world is good for UK universities. However, the government takes seriously any concerns about overseas interference in the UK's HE sector. The department continually assesses potential threats, and takes the protection of individuals' rights, freedoms and safety in the UK very seriously.

Any attempt by a foreign power to intimidate, harass or harm individuals or communities in the UK will not be tolerated. The National Security Act (2023) brings together vital new measures to protect the UK's national security. The Foreign Influence Registration Scheme (FIRS) has been created to tackle covert influence in the UK.

The Defending Democracy Taskforce is reviewing the UK's approach to transnational repression to ensure that there is a robust and joined up response across government and law enforcement.

The Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023 will ensure that universities in England have the tools they need to deal with interference with, and threats to, freedom of speech and academic freedom wherever they originate.

Graduates: Visas

Emma Hardy MP (Labour): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the graduate visa scheme on the achievement of the Government's objectives in the International Education Strategy. [UIN 26580]

Luke Hall MP (Conservative): Strengthening the UK's visa offer for international higher education students was an important element of the International Education Strategy (IES) and its objectives, particularly the ambitious target of attracting 600,000



international students. The IES update in 2021 incorporated the graduate route to reflect its importance in achieving the outlined ambitions.

With 679,970 international students in the 2021/22 academic year, the UK has met the IES international student ambition of attracting 600,000 international students per year by 2030 for two years running in both 2020/21 and 2021/22. The department is on track and will continue working towards the IES education export ambition of £35 billion per year by 2030 with £27.9 billion revenue in 2021. Data used to track progress against these two ambitions is published annually.

Overseas Students

Emma Hardy MP (Labour): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate she has made of the average contribution of international students to the economy in each of the last five years. [UIN 26579]

Luke Hall MP (Conservative): The government recognises the significant economic and cultural contribution that international students make to the UK's higher education sector.

Estimated total UK revenue from international students, through their tuition fees and living expenditure, in each of the last five years for which data is available is listed in the table below:

Calendar year Total international student exports (£billion)

2017	13.63
2018	15.61
2019	17.48
2020	19.36
2021	20.65



Visas: Graduates

Emma Hardy MP (Labour): To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps he has taken to assess the potential (a) social and (b) economic impact of possible policy changes to the graduate route visa for international students; and whether his Department assesses the potential impact of such proposals at the constituency level. [UIN 26578]

Tom Pursglove MP (Conservative): We are committed to attracting the best and brightest to study at our world-class universities, whilst maintaining the integrity of our immigration system, which is why the Home Secretary commissioned an independent review of the Graduate Route.

The MAC reported back on 14 May and the review's findings are currently being considered very closely.

The Home Office produces impact assessments as a matter of course when policy proposals are developed.

Overseas Students

Lord Carlile (Crossbench): To ask His Majesty's Government how they will maintain routes for international students to study and work in the UK. [UIN HL4768]

Lord Sharpe (Conservative): The student route launched in 2020 and provides a way for international students to apply to study in the UK. Some students have work rights such as those studying at degree level and above at higher education institutions, who can work for up to 20 hours per week during term-time, and full-time during vacations. Upon course completion, students may apply to extend their leave in the UK, including under work routes, if relevant requirements are met.

We keep all our immigration policies under constant review to ensure they best serve the UK and reflect the public's priorities.

Universities: China

Lord Alton (Crossbench): To ask His Majesty's Government what collaborations on medical research are currently taking place between government-funded universities in the UK, and medical and research institutions based in China; and whether any of these collaborations relate to organ transplantation. [UIN HL4495]





Viscount Camrose (Conservative): The International Science Partnerships Fund and Newton Fund have active medical research programmes involving collaborations between UK Higher Education Institutions and Chinese counterparts. These predominantly focus on antimicrobial resistance and pandemic preparedness and none of them relate to organ transplantation.



Sector News

The Graduate Route: What Voters Think – Russell Group briefing

On Monday 20 May, the Russell Group published a briefing with polling that demonstrates that voters support international students and the value they bring to the UK.

It found the majority of respondents think that restricting international students would be the wrong priority, and that Government should be focusing on illegal immigration:

- 57% think tackling illegal immigration should be the Government's immigration priority.
- Just 2% think Government should prioritise reducing immigration numbers by taking action to restrict the ability of students to stay in the UK and work after their studies.
- Only 1% want Government to prioritise reducing international student numbers, compared to 45% who say Government should prioritise blocking small boat arrivals.

Dr Tim Bradshaw, Chief Executive of the Russell Group said:

It's clear that the British public recognise the value of international students to their local economy, to our society and to our global standing – and it's therefore no surprise that they overwhelmingly want to see the numbers of international students increase or remain the same. Making further restrictions would not only run counter to plans to grow the national economy, but would be out of step with what voters want.

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

Framework Programme 10 – Russell Group briefing

On Monday 20 May, the Russell Group published a briefing on the European Union's Framework Programmes and the UK rejoining Horizon Europe.



The briefing includes reflection on:

- Protecting and boosting fundamental research.
- Support for lower technology readiness level projects where risk is higher, but so are potential rewards.
- Consideration for the potential long-term impact of technologically innovative, ground-breaking projects.
- Increased efforts to raise awareness, across participating states, of the support available for end-to-end innovation.

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

National Security and Investment Act: guidance for the higher education and research-intensive sectors – Cabinet Office guidance

On Tuesday 21 May, the Cabinet Office published guidance to help Higher Education Institutions, other research organisations and investors in this area to understand the scope of the National Security and Investment Act 2021 (NSI Act).

It covers:

- Sources of help for higher education institutions.
- A summary of the NSI Act.
- Examples of assets and entities within the scope of the NSI Act (qualifying assets and entities) within the higher education and research-intensive sectors.
- How you may be required to notify the government about an acquisition of a qualifying entity in one of the specified 17 sensitive areas of the UK economy and get approval from the government before you can complete it.
- When you can voluntarily notify the government about other qualifying acquisitions.
- What happens if the government decides to assess your activity in more detail (“calling in”).



- Hypothetical scenarios of qualifying acquisitions of entities and assets in the higher education and research-intensive sectors.

Higher Education Institutions and other research organisations should be aware of the NSI Act when collaborating with other parties to acquire, sell or develop qualifying entities or assets.

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

Increase funding for educational research for UK's future prosperity – British Academy and Royal Academy policy briefing

On Tuesday 21 May, the British Academy and Royal Academy published a joint policy briefing on investment in educational research.

Its recommendations include:

- Government should increase funding for educational research, bringing it into line with other important public service research funding.
- Research funders should include more long-term research funding opportunities and support for underrepresented and emerging research themes to provide deeper insight into important questions and into the effectiveness of policy changes.
- Government should pilot a model of advocacy and coordination to strengthen the educational research infrastructure. This would offer strategic advice to government and help to translate evidence into practice.

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

UCAS Keynote speech from Vivienne Stern, Chief Executive – UUK publication

On Tuesday 21 May, Vivienne Stern, Chief Executive of UUK, delivered a keynote speech at UCAS' Access All Areas conference.

We need to push back against the elitism and snobbery which says that it was a mistake to expand participation; that we should return to a system where a



tiny proportion of the population have access to the life changing experience on offer in our universities.

We've got work to do. You are at the heart of it. It matters to all of us.

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

Position on the OfS's approach to Free Speech – Russell Group briefing

On Wednesday 22 May, the Russell Group published summary outlining its position on the OfS' approach to free speech.

It recommends:

- Encouraging an open and supportive dialogue that allows institutions and students' unions the opportunity to share approaches with the OfS and seek informal advice.
- Providing clarity on how the OfS understands free speech 'within the law' in the context of transnational education (TNE).
- Providing clarification to ensure that interpretation does not undermine universities' autonomy over course content.
- Allowing universities and students' unions to make representations as part of the complaints process.
- A full review of the new OfS free speech complaints scheme in Spring 2025, to evaluate effectiveness and draw on early cases to build up useful precedents.

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

International Graduate Outcomes 2024 – UUKi and QS report

On Thursday 23 May, Universities UK International (UUKi), in collaboration with Quacquarelli Symonds (QS), published a report shedding light on the experiences and achievements of over 10,000 international students who have graduated from 37 UK universities in the past six years.

Key findings include:



- **Students are drawn to the UK by its high-quality universities and a great learning experience.** 59% of the surveyed graduates chose to study in the UK due to the perceived high quality of its universities.
- **The Graduate route visa provides a favourable learning and developmental environment for graduates and positive relationships with employers.** 73% of surveyed graduates felt that the Graduate route visa met their expectations, reporting higher job satisfaction compared to those on other visa types.
- **Through post-study work, international graduates add value to sectors that are vital to the UK economy.** Graduates on the Graduate route visa contribute significantly to the UK economy, with many working in key sectors such as healthcare and education.
- **Universities need to improve career support for international students with targeted schemes to meet their unique needs.** Despite high satisfaction with their educational experience, 53% of surveyed graduates feel more could be done in terms of career support and professional placements.
- **International graduates will continue to support the UK economy on returning home.** 71% of surveyed graduates feel a lasting connection with the UK, and 57% are more likely to engage in business with the UK due to their educational experiences.

Jamie Arrowsmith, Director of Universities UK International, said:

The UK's position as a leading destination for international students is something which we are rightly proud of. Every year, hundreds of thousands of students from around the globe chose to study here because of the strength and reputation of our universities.

Yet that is why it is essential we continually reflect and improve our offer to international students, with the findings from the UUKi-QS International Graduates Outcomes Report providing essential insight into the international student experience. As uncertainty looms over the UK government's commitment to the Graduate route, this report could not be timelier or more important.

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



Reason for international migration, international students update: May 2024 – ONS statistics

On Thursday 23 May, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) published statistics for international student migration to the UK. Provisional estimates, 2018 to 2023. These are official statistics in development.

The statistics show:

- For the year ending (YE) December 2023, net migration of non-EU international migrants who initially arrived in the UK on a study-related visa decreased, falling to 247,000 compared with our updated estimate of 328,000 in the YE December 2022; this includes those who emigrated but had transitioned onto a different visa type during their time in the UK.
- An increase in emigration and slight decrease in immigration led to a decrease in net migration; in the YE December 2023, 133,000 non-EU international students left the UK (up 42,000 from the YE December 2022), and 379,000 arrived in the UK on a study-related visa (down 40,000 from the YE December 2022).
- Analysis shows long-term international students are staying in the UK longer and transitioning to other visa types, rather than leaving at the end of their studies; 40% of those who arrived in the YE December 2021 transitioned within two years of arrival, compared with 5% of those who arrived in the YE December 2018.
- The proportion of non-EU nationals immigrating to the UK as dependants of someone on a study-related visa has increased over the last five years; from 8% (9,000) of those who arrived on a study-related visa in the YE December 2019 to 27% (102,000) in the YE December 2023.
- Indian and Nigerian nationalities had the largest increases in study-related visas between the YE December 2018 and December 2022; Indian nationality increased from 13,100 to 142,200 and Nigerian nationality increased from 4,300 to 89,800.
- Previously published estimates for the YE December 2022 are revised today; the YE December 2023 estimates published today are provisional and are subject to revision in future publications, as assumptions about length of stay or departure are replaced by data.



You can [view the full statistics release](#).

Immigration system statistics, year ending March 2024 – Home Office statistics

On Thursday 23 May, the Home Office published quarterly statistics on people coming to the UK, extensions of stay, citizenship, EUSS, asylum, detentions and returns.

The statistics show:

- There were 446,924 sponsored study visas granted to students in the year ending March 2024, 6% fewer than the previous year but 66% higher than 2019, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Two-thirds (66%) of student visas were for a masters level course in the year ending March 2024.
- Grants of extensions to study for main applicants decreased by 38% to 35,175 in the year ending March 2024, compared to the previous year.

You can [view the full statistics release](#).

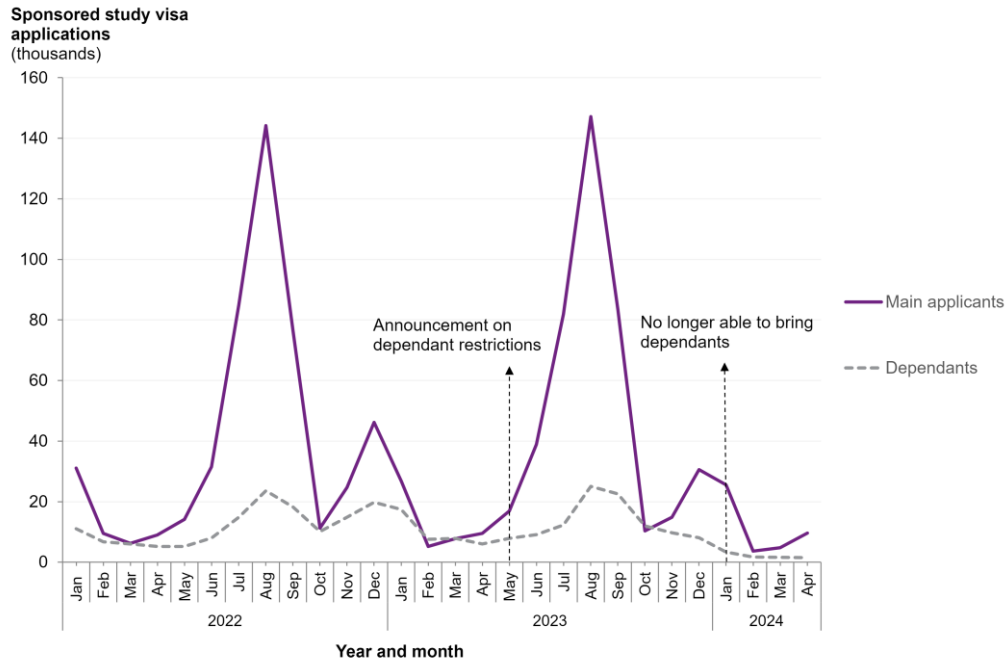
Monthly monitoring of entry clearance visa applications – Home Office statistics

On Thursday 23 May, the Home Office published provisional data providing an indication of the number of people who have an intention to enter the UK for work and study reasons.

This release includes:



Figure 2: Monthly applications for ‘Sponsored study’ visas, January 2022 to April 2024



You can [view the full statistics release](#).

New measures to tackle student visa abuse – Home Office and DfE statement

On Thursday 23 May, the Home Office and the Department for Education (DfE) released a statement on international student visas, which confirmed there would be no change in relation to the graduate visa.

New measures announced include:

- Mandating universities to sign up to a stringent framework for recruitment agents.
- Tougher compliance standards for institutions recruiting students from overseas.
- International students will have to prove their financial self-sufficiency.
- Reviewing English language assessments with the objective of standardising independent assessments.



- Restrictions on remote delivery.

Home Secretary, Rt Hon James Cleverly MP, said:

We have taken decisive and necessary action to deliver the largest cut in legal migration in our country's history. Applications are already falling sharply, down by almost a quarter on key routes in the first four months of this year compared to last, with the full impact of our package still to be seen.

But we must go further to make sure our immigration routes aren't abused. That's why we are cracking down on rogue international agents and, building on work across government, to ensure international students are coming here to study, not work.

Education Secretary, Rt Hon Gillian Keegan MP, said:

I am proud that British universities have a fantastic reputation both at home and abroad, and it is testament to the quality of education they offer that so many people aspire to study in this country.

It is right that we strike the balance between controlling immigration and making sure the UK remains the 'go to' place for students around the world, supporting our brilliant universities and enabling the best and brightest to study here.

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

It is a huge relief to have confirmation from Government that the graduate route remains in place.

We share the Government's commitment to tackling any abuse of the visa system and support efforts to tighten restrictions on agents, which are in line with much of what we have proposed. We will work diligently with Government to ensure we maintain a high level of trust and confidence in the way universities recruit and support international students. It is in all our interests that we do so, given the enormous value that international students bring to the whole of the UK, and not just to universities themselves. What we need now is a period of stability, and a shared commitment to delivering a stable and well managed international student landscape.

[Responding to the statement](#), Professor Iain Gillespie, Convener of Universities Scotland and Principal and Vice Chancellor of the University of Dundee, said:



Universities are relieved to get confirmation that the Graduate route will remain in place, albeit with a new package of measures aimed at future-proofing against any potential abuse. This is welcome news for prospective international students, for universities and for the UK economy. Business leaders and the leaders of our cities and regions have been clear in their support for the graduate route as a vital component in the attraction of international talent and economic growth.

The MAC was very clear there is no evidence of any significant abuse of the graduate route, however universities are committed to working with Government to retain high levels of confidence in our universities. As such, we will work constructively with Government on the package it has set out, including mandatory regulation of agents, new measures around franchise providers and language requirements.

It is vitally important that the rest of the world hears that the graduate route remains in place so that we can arrest any further negative impact on recruitment for the autumn. Recruitment has taken a major hit this academic year, with the financial consequences already felt deeply in institutions.

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

Trans and non-binary student experiences in higher education – HEPI report

On Thursday 23 May, the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) published a report exploring the experiences of trans and non-binary students throughout higher education.

Key findings include:

- At the point of applying to higher education, trans and non-binary people may face additional challenges. Nearly a quarter (24%) of trans applicants have experience of care against just 4% of applicants who are not trans; on average, they also have lower A-level and BTEC grades. Trans and non-binary students are also more likely to have a disability than students who are not trans or non-binary.



- Throughout their time in higher education, trans and non-binary students tend to have poorer wellbeing than students who are not trans or non-binary. More than half of trans applicants (56%) feel ‘rejected by others’ compared with a quarter (26%) of applicants who are not trans.
- However, of the three stages explored, trans and non-binary students are comparatively happier while at university. On some questions such as life satisfaction, the gap in wellbeing (between trans and non-binary students on one hand and students who are not trans or non-binary on the other) disappears or decreases while students are studying but reappears or increases once they leave higher education.
- Half of trans students (50%) and almost half of non-binary students (49%) have considered withdrawing from university – most commonly because of mental health issues. This compares with 28% of the whole student population.
- Trans and non-binary students are less likely to study subjects such as Business and Law, but are generally not less likely to be studying STEM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths). In fact, nearly a fifth (18%) of non-binary students study Biological Sciences, compared with just 7% of men and 13% of women. However, trans students study Social Studies at a higher rate (20%, compared with 13% of students who are not trans).
- In the 2020/21 academic year, more trans or non-binary students failed to progress to the next year of their degree (16%) compared to students who are not trans or non-binary (10%). Trans and non-binary students who did achieve their degree were awarded ‘good’ degrees (a first or upper second – 75% did so) at a somewhat lower rate than their classmates (of whom 80% did so).
- HEPI find there is a trans and non-binary penalty, with these students earning on average £2,000 less 15 months after graduation than their peers who are not trans or non-binary. They are also less likely to be employed in ‘managerial’ and ‘professional’ roles.
- Despite all these challenges, many trans and non-binary students HEPI spoke to were having a positive experience in their university setting.

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



LEO Graduate outcomes provider level data – DfE statistics release

On Thursday 23 May, the Department for Education (DfE) published official statistics for LEO Graduate outcomes provider level data for the 2021/22 tax year. LEO Graduate outcomes provider level data is employment and earnings outcomes of higher education first degree graduates by subject studied and graduate characteristics, with breakdowns by HE provider.

The headline facts and figures are:

- The amount of variation in graduate employment outcomes between providers is similar across most subjects. In the 2021/22 tax year, five years after graduating (in 2016), the greatest variation between providers in the percentage of UK domiciled graduates in sustained employment, further study or both was for graduates who had studied Languages and area studies (47.1% to 96.1%). The smallest variation in this outcome was among graduates who had studied Medicine and dentistry and Veterinary sciences (86.3% to 100.0% and 84.1% to 100.0%, respectively). We have excluded Celtic Studies from this comparison because it is offered by few providers.
- The amount of variation in graduate earnings between providers is greater for some subjects than for others. Five years after graduation, the biggest differences in median earnings between providers were for graduates in Computing (£23,400 to £99,600), followed by Economics, Law, and Mathematical Sciences. Again, excluding Celtic studies, the smallest differences were for Sports and exercise sciences and English Studies (£21,500 to £35,000 and £19,700 to £33,900, respectively).
- Earnings of graduates from providers in Scotland and the North East are most negatively affected by their graduates tending to work in regions with (on average) lower salaries. Earnings will be impacted by the region of residence five years after graduation, which may be different to the region of the HE provider. Adjusted earnings figures are therefore provided, based on the overall regional distribution of graduates five years after graduation. This has the effect of raising earnings for graduates from HE providers in Scotland and the North East and lowering earnings for graduates from HE providers in Wales, the North West, and London.
- For most providers and subjects, graduates' earnings have increased at or above the rate of inflation since 2015/16. Between the 2015/16 and 2021/22



tax years, the rate of inflation Consumer Price Index that includes owner occupiers' housing costs (CPIH) was 13.1% based on data published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). In the 2021-22 tax year, graduates from almost three quarters (72%) of HE providers by subject combinations had median earnings five years after graduation that were at least 13.1% higher than they had been for the 2015-16 cohort five years after graduation.

- Graduates' earnings in some subjects are more strongly associated with their prior attainment than other subjects. The largest difference between median earnings in the top and bottom prior attainment bands was for Economics, at £23,500. Computing had the second largest difference, of £21,900. The smallest difference was for Nursing and midwifery with a difference in median earnings of just £200. The pattern was reversed for Architecture, building and planning; providers with median prior attainment in the lowest band had median graduate earnings five years after graduation that were £6,200 higher than those of providers in the highest median prior attainment band, a finding that could reflect the length and structure of courses leading to qualifications in this subject.

You can [view the full statistics release](#).

Local and Regional Policy Manifesto – GuildHE manifesto

On Friday 24 May, GuildHE launched a Local and Regional Policy Manifesto with a series of 3 recommendations to the next government:

1. Strengthen the voice of universities and colleges in regional strategic planning for better local growth and regeneration.
2. Harness the full diversity of higher education providers to address skills barriers and low productivity.
3. Reform the regional research and innovation funding system to be fit for purpose.

Anthony McClaran, GuildHE Chair, and Vice-Chancellor of St Mary's University Twickenham said:

Universities and colleges play a vital role in driving local and regional economic growth. They enrich the social and cultural fabric of their communities helping foster a sense of pride, but there is more that we can do.





The GuildHE manifesto makes a number of recommendations about how universities and colleges can further support local communities. We address skills gaps, support local businesses, drive engagement with cultural hubs and mobilise regional investment in research and innovation. By unlocking and maximising the potential of the diversity of UK higher education providers we will make better places together.

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

