



# All-Party Parliamentary University Group

## Weekly update

**21 – 25 July 2025**

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

If you would like more information on parliamentary business, please contact:

Andrea Rezman | [appug@universitiesuk.ac.uk](mailto:appug@universitiesuk.ac.uk)

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



# Contents

Parliamentary business	4
Department for Education - Oral Questions	4
Summer recess	4
Forthcoming business	5
Summer recess	5
Written questions and statements	6
DCMS: Journalism	6
DCMS: Journalism	6
DCMS: Journalism: Higher Education	7
Department for Education: Students: Costs	8
Department for Education: Schools and Universities: Admissions	8
Department for Education: Higher Education: Finance	9
Department for Education: Universities: Admissions	9
Department for Business and Trade: Innovation: Greater London	10
DCMS: Journalism: Higher Education	11
DCMS: Journalism: Higher Education	12
DCMS: Journalism: Higher Education	13
Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Science and Discovery Centres: STEM Subjects	14
Department for Education: Universities: Finance	14
Department for Education: Students: Loans	15
Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Life Sciences: Migrant Workers	15
Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Advanced Research and Invention Agency: Freedom of Information	16
Home Office: Proscribed Organisations: Universities	16
Department for Education: Antisemitism: Universities	17
Department for Education: Higher Education: Finance	17
Department for Education: Apprentices	18
Department for Education: Universities: Antisemitism	18

Department for Education: Universities: Assessments	19
Sector news	21
Graduate Outcomes - HESA official statistics	21
Commission on Students in Higher Education - APPG for Students report	22
New HEPI report reveals the hidden impact of menstrual cycles on students' education	23
Analysis of research integrity annual statements 2025	24
Conservative party reshuffle	25
OfS proposal - tighter control of subcontractual arrangements in higher education	25
Research England funding budgets for 2025 to 2026	26
Contextualised HE Entry Track Impact Report	27
OfS business plan - 2025-26	27
How Universities Can Help Drive Local and Regional Economies - report by Institute of Economic Development and AtkinsRéalis	28

# Parliamentary business

## Department for Education - Oral Questions

On Monday 21 July, at 2.30pm the Secretary of State for Education, Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson MP, and her ministerial colleagues, answered oral questions in the House of Commons.

**Shockat Adam MP** (Independent) raised concerns about potential redundancies and faculty closures at De Montfort University and the University of Leicester. He asked what financial support the Department is providing to protect academic jobs, particularly in subjects like chemistry, humanities, and languages. The Education Secretary responded that universities are autonomous in financial decisions but noted the government's aim to stabilise the sector through the recent tuition fee increase. She added that a post-16 education strategy addressing these issues will be published later this year.

You can find [a list of questions](#) and [read the transcript](#).

## Summer recess

The House of Commons will rise for summer recess on 22 July 2025, while the House of Lords will rise on 24 July 2025. Both Houses are scheduled to return on 1 September 2025.

# Forthcoming business

## Summer recess

Both Houses rose for recess and are scheduled to return on 1 September 2025.

# Written questions and statements

## DCMS: Journalism

**Angus MacDonald (Liberal Democrat):** (UIN 66509) To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether her Department has made an assessment of the potential impact of the withdrawal of Strategic Priorities Grant funding for journalism courses on the creative industries.

**Stephanie Peacock:** The Government has had to make tough prioritisation decisions driven by the challenging fiscal context that we inherited. For the Department of Education, this has meant prioritising support for high-cost subjects that are essential to delivery of our industrial strategy and core funding to support access to higher education for disadvantaged groups. It is important that the targeted funding allocated through the Strategic Priorities Grant (SPG) supports courses that have higher costs of delivery and our Plan for Growth.

The Government remains committed to supporting the invaluable role which journalism plays in the fabric of our society. We acknowledge journalism as an important and valued subject in higher education, alongside numerous other subjects that do not attract SPG high-cost subject funding, such as history, languages, economics, maths and law.

DCMS officials are engaging with the Department for Education, as well as the press sector and the key journalism professional bodies, to better understand the impact this will have on the journalism industry, as part of the wider creative industries.

Grouped Questions: 65790, 66507

## DCMS: Journalism

**Angus MacDonald (Liberal Democrats):** (UIN 66507) To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what recent assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of the withdrawal of Strategic Priorities Grant funding from journalism courses on the future sustainability of the journalism sector.

**Stephanie Peacock:** The Government has had to make tough prioritisation decisions driven by the challenging fiscal context that we inherited. For the Department of Education, this has meant prioritising support for high-cost subjects that are essential to delivery of our industrial strategy and core funding to support access to higher education for disadvantaged groups. It is important that the targeted funding

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Grouped Questions: 65790, 66509

## DCMS: Journalism: Higher Education

**Rebecca Long-Bailey (Labour):** (UIN 65790) To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Education on the decision to end Strategic Priorities Grant funding for journalism courses in higher education.

**Stephanie Peacock:** The Government has had to make tough prioritisation decisions driven by the challenging fiscal context that we inherited. For the Department of Education, this has meant prioritising support for high-cost subjects that are essential to delivery of our industrial strategy and core funding to support access to higher education for disadvantaged groups. It is important that the targeted funding allocated through the Strategic Priorities Grant (SPG) supports courses that have higher costs of delivery and our Plan for Growth.

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Grouped Questions: 66507, 66509

## Department for Education: Students: Costs

**Paula Barker (Labour):** (UIN 65890) To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate her Department has made of the average weekly cost of (a) student accommodation, (b) food and (c) living for university students in the latest period for which data is available.

**Janet Daby:** The latest Student Income and Expenditure Survey for 2021/22 collects data on income and expenditure across the academic year, assumed to be 39 weeks.

In the 2021/22 academic year, full-time undergraduate students' total median living costs were £5,841 including spending on food, entertainment, personal items and other spending not directly related to students' courses.

Full-time undergraduate students had a median spend of £1,814 on food in the 2021/22 academic year.

The median expenditure on housing costs across full-time undergraduate students who incurred those costs was £4,940.

## Department for Education: Schools and Universities: Admissions

**Richard Holden (Conservative):** (UIN 66654) To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential impact of the commencement of the socio-economic duty under the Equality Act 2010 on (a) school and (b) university admissions.

**Catherine McKinnell:** The government issued a call for evidence on equality law, which included commencing the socio-economic duty under the Equality Act 2010. This closed on 30 June 2025.

All mainstream state-funded schools are required to comply with relevant legislation and the statutory School Admissions Code. It is for a school's admission authority to decide which oversubscription criteria to include in their arrangements. They must ensure that their arrangements will not disadvantage unfairly, either directly or indirectly, a child from a particular social or racial group, or a child with a disability or special educational needs.

We will support the aspiration of every person who meets the requirements and wants to go to university, regardless of their background, where they live and their personal circumstances.



Gaps in access, completion and outcomes between disadvantaged students and others at university are unacceptably large and stubborn.

## Department for Education: Higher Education: Finance

**Nadia Whittome (Labour):** (UIN 67518) To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment she has made of the financial sustainability of the higher education funding model.

**Janet Daby:** Higher education (HE) providers are independent from government and as such are responsible for making the financial decisions that support their long-term sustainability.

To support providers in stabilising their finances, the Office for Students (OfS) continues to dedicate significant resources to ensuring the sector's financial sustainability. We have appointed Professor Edward Peck as OfS Chair, and he will play a key role in strengthening this commitment while also expanding opportunities in HE.

Additionally, we have made the difficult decision to increase tuition fee limits by 3.1%, in line with inflation, from the 2025/26 academic year.

The government also provides funding through the Strategic Priorities Grant (SPG) on an annual basis to support teaching and students. This includes funding to support teaching of expensive-to-deliver subjects such as science and engineering, access and participation of students from under-represented groups, and world-leading specialist providers. The total SPG for the 2025/26 financial year will be £1,348 million in recurrent (programme) grant and £84 million for capital to support teaching and learning.

We aim to publish our plans for HE reform soon as part of the Post-16 Skills White Paper, and will work with the sector and the OfS to deliver the change that the country needs.

## Department for Education: Universities: Admissions

**Chi Onwurah (Labour):** (UIN 66911) To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to support universities in (a) meeting student recruitment and (b) space targets in the context of current immigration policies.

**Janet Daby:** The government has been clear that we welcome international students who meet the requirements to study in the UK. Higher education (HE) providers in the UK hosted 732,285 international students in the 2023/24 academic year, who come from all over the world and benefit UK HE and our society as a whole, boosting our economy by more than £21 billion a year.

The government is currently reviewing the UK's International Education Strategy to ensure that it aligns with wider government policy and provides clear direction to the sector, including on international student recruitment.

Further, the department and the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology are working to ensure that the UK space sector can access the skills and talent needed to grow whilst ensuring long-term investment and growth of the domestic talent pool, in line with the Immigration White Paper and the Advanced Manufacturing Sector Plan.

This may include collaborative working on the 2025/26 Space Sector Skills Survey, or closer engagement in key sector-facing and ministerial forums on space, all of which will be key to advising the government on how to achieve the right balance of international talent and domestic opportunity.

## **Department for Business and Trade: Innovation: Greater London**

**Chi Onwurah (Labour):** (UIN 66905) To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what his planned timeline is for the rollout of innovation and growth hubs in London; what level of economic investment is expected to be allocated to those hubs in London over the next five years; and what criteria will be used to determine the location and focus of innovation and growth hubs in the UK.

**Gareth Thomas:** The government is supporting innovation clusters nationwide, including the Department for Science and Innovation and Technology (DIST) led £500 million Local Innovation Partnerships Fund, with at least £30 million allocated to London and additional funding available through competitive bidding for other regions.

The Department for Business and Trade provide core funding to 41 Growth Hubs across England, with £15 million (including £540,700 for Grow London Local) committed for 2025/26. These offer businesses support and advice across all sectors and stages.

## DCMS: Journalism: Higher Education

**Kim Johnson (Labour):** (UIN 67499) To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the reprioritisation of high-cost subject funding for journalism courses on the aims of the local media strategy, announced in December 2024.

**Stephanie Peacock:** The Government has had to make tough prioritisation decisions driven by the challenging fiscal context that we inherited. For the Department of Education, this has meant prioritising support for high-cost subjects that are essential to delivery of our industrial strategy and core funding to support access to higher education for disadvantaged groups. It is important that the targeted funding allocated through the Strategic Priorities Grant (SPG) supports courses that have higher costs of delivery and our Plan for Growth.

The Government's commitment that opportunity is available for all remains unwavering, and we will achieve this by addressing gaps in access and outcomes faced by disadvantaged groups. That is why we have asked that the Office for Students retain the per-student funding rates for the full-time, part-time, disabled premium and mental health Student Premiums at their current level. We have also maintained funding for Uni Connect, which delivers targeted interventions and support aimed at increasing the number of young people from under-represented groups going into further and higher education.

The Government also remains committed to supporting the invaluable role which journalism plays in the fabric of our society. We acknowledge journalism as an important and valued subject in higher education, alongside numerous other subjects that do not attract SPG high-cost subject funding, such as history, languages, economics, maths and law.

DCMS officials are engaging with the Department for Education, as well as the press sector and the key journalism professional bodies, to better understand the impact this will have on the journalism industry. These discussions form part of our planning for the DCMS Local Media Strategy. It is important to maintain a healthy and diverse pipeline of talent into the industry through the provision of journalism education opportunities. With this in mind, we are exploring through the Strategy whether more can be done to promote journalism as a career amongst young people, including through the DCMS-funded Creative Careers Programme which is intended to promote careers in the creative industries among young people and recently added the National Council for the Training of Journalists to its steering group.

Grouped Questions: 67378, 67498

## DCMS: Journalism: Higher Education

**Kim Johnson (Labour):** (UIN 67498) To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Education on the decision to reprioritise high-cost subject funding away from (a) journalism, (b) media studies, (c) publishing and (d) information services.

**Stephanie Peacock:** The Government has had to make tough prioritisation decisions driven by the challenging fiscal context that we inherited. For the Department of Education, this has meant prioritising support for high-cost subjects that are essential to delivery of our industrial strategy and core funding to support access to higher education for disadvantaged groups. It is important that the targeted funding allocated through the Strategic Priorities Grant (SPG) supports courses that have higher costs of delivery and our Plan for Growth.

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Grouped Questions: 67378, 67499

## DCMS: Journalism: Higher Education

**Rebecca Long-Bailey (Labour):** (UIN 67378) To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of ending the Strategic Priorities Grant funding for journalism courses in higher education on students from different social and economic backgrounds seeking employment in professional journalism.

**Stephanie Peacock:** The Government has had to make tough prioritisation decisions driven by the challenging fiscal context that we inherited. For the Department of Education, this has meant prioritising support for high-cost subjects that are essential to delivery of our industrial strategy and core funding to support access to higher education for disadvantaged groups. It is important that the targeted funding allocated through the Strategic Priorities Grant (SPG) supports courses that have higher costs of delivery and our Plan for Growth.

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Grouped Questions: 67498, 67499

## Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Science and Discovery Centres: STEM Subjects

**Chi Onwurah (Labour):** (UIN 66906) To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what assessment she has made of the impact of science and discovery centres' on (a) science communication, (b) public engagement and (c) the level of interest in STEM skills amongst school students; and what assessment she has made of trends in the level of financial resilience of these centres since the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Feryal Clark:** The Government has not conducted an assessment of interest in science and discovery centres among school students. The financial sustainability of Science and Discovery Centres was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, as entrance fees are a significant income source. Sector surveys by the Association for Science and Discovery Centres, conducted in Spring 2024 and 2025, show that visitor numbers have since increased, with over 5.2 million last year—including school children, families and communities. Science and Discovery Centres engaged 37% of UK schools and offered programmes such as 'Thinking Doing Talking Science' to improve attainment, particularly among disadvantaged pupils.

Source

## Department for Education: Universities: Finance

**Ian Sollom (Liberal Democrats):** (UIN 68126) To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what role her Department has in facilitating agreements between financially distressed universities and their commercial lenders.

**Janet Daby:** The Office for Students (OfS) has not facilitated debt restructuring packages of any university since 2018.

Universities are independent from government and as such are responsible for managing their finances. This includes negotiations with commercial lenders.

While the OfS has statutory duties in relation to the financial sustainability of the higher education (HE) sector, the government has a clear interest in understanding the sector's level of risk. As such, the department continues to work closely with the OfS in order to better understand the sector's changing financial landscape.

This government is committed to supporting the sector in moving towards a more stable financial footing. That is why we have made the difficult decision to increase tuition fee limits by 3.1%, in line with inflation, from the 2025/26 academic year.

Moreover, we have appointed Professor Edward Peck as OfS Chair, where he will play a key role in strengthening the OfS's commitment to financial sustainability while also expanding opportunities in HE.

We aim to publish our plans for HE reform soon as part of the Post-16 Skills White Paper, and work with the sector and the OfS to deliver the change that the country needs.

Grouped Questions: 68125

## **Department for Education: Students: Loans**

**Daisy Cooper (Liberal Democrats):** (UIN 67470) To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of revising the thresholds for determining the interest rate on student loan repayments for people living abroad in the context of local taxation levels.

**Janet Daby:** The repayment of student loans, including the setting of interest rates applied to student loan plan types for borrowers in the UK or overseas, is determined by the Education (Student Loans) (Repayment) Regulations 2009 (as amended).

Overseas repayment thresholds are calculated using World Bank price level index (PLI) (which is used to compare differences between the cost of living in the UK and other countries), not the tax rates of countries of residence. This means that if a borrower is resident in a country calculated as having a lower cost of living than the UK, the repayment threshold applied to their loan will be lower than if they are residing in the UK. The country bandings and thresholds are reviewed annually.

Using a recognised measure of the relative cost of living in different countries ensures that borrowers residing in different countries are assessed in a fair, transparent and consistent way.

## **Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Life Sciences: Migrant Workers**

**Scott Arthur (Labour):** (UIN 68206) To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State

for the Home Department to ensure the life sciences sector has the visa routes it needs to attract global talent to the UK.

**Feryal Clark:** The Government is committed to attracting top global talent to the UK. We are working with the Home Office and the Home Secretary to deliver the Immigration White Paper, ensuring that the very highly skilled can come to the UK. The Life Sciences sector already attracts talent through routes including the Global Talent and High Potential Individual visas and the recently published Life Sciences Sector Plan sets out clear actions HMG will take to attract international Life Sciences talent.

## **Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Advanced Research and Invention Agency: Freedom of Information**

**Toby Perkins (Labour):** (UIN67855) To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what assessment has he made of the reasons for the exemption of the Advanced Research and Invention Agency from the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

**Feryal Clark:** ARIA is a small body with limited administrative capacity to handle Freedom of Information Act requests. It is important that ARIA is focused on funding long-term transformational research for the benefit of the UK.

ARIA is, however, dedicated to transparency. ARIA has other statutory commitments to transparency, including requirements for it to submit an annual report and a statement of accounts, which are laid before Parliament and audited by the National Audit Office or a commercial auditor. In addition to this, ARIA regularly publishes transparency information on its website, including on its financial transactions, contracts and funding recipients.

## **Home Office: Proscribed Organisations: Universities**

**Matt Vickers (Conservative):** (UIN 68497) To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she has had recent discussions with police forces on expressions of support for (a) Hamas and (b) Hezbollah at universities.

**Dan Jarvis:** The investigation and prosecution of criminal offences, including determining whether an offence has been committed or not, is a matter for the police and Crown Prosecution Service, which are operationally independent.



## Department for Education: Antisemitism: Universities

**Greg Smith (Conservative):** (UIN 64117) To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to hold discussions with Vice Chancellors on the effectiveness of disciplinary procedures in tackling antisemitism at universities.

**Janet Daby:** Last month, my right hon Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, brought together Vice Chancellors and community leaders to hear testimonials from Jewish students and to discuss next steps to ensure safer, more inclusive campuses for all. This included productive discussion of how students' confidence in the disciplinary processes could be improved, while ensuring that confidentiality requirements continue to be met.

The department remains deeply committed to working with universities, sector partners and stakeholder groups to effectively tackle the unacceptably high level of antisemitism on our campuses.

## Department for Education: Higher Education: Finance

**Vikki Slade (Liberal Democrats):** (UIN 68284) To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the impact of the current funding model for higher education on (a) students and (b) University staff.

**Janet Daby:** The government is committed to creating a secure future for our world-leading higher education (HE) sector and has already taken a number of actions to help move the sector towards a more stable financial footing, including the difficult decision to increase maximum tuition fee limits for the 2025/26 academic year by 3.1%, in line with the forecast rate of inflation.

We have published an Equality Impact Assessment of the impact of changes to fee limits and student support for the 2025/26 academic year on undergraduate students with protected characteristics and disadvantaged students.

The department recognises that some HE providers are making difficult decisions around staffing in order to safeguard their financial sustainability. Ultimately the sector is independent from government and as such must continue to make the necessary and appropriate financial decisions to ensure their long-term sustainability.

However, we expect providers to work with staff, to help identify how best to operate efficiently. All efficiency measures taken by the sector should provide a better long-term future for students, staff and the country.

## Department for Education: Apprentices

**Gregory Campbell (Democratic Unionist Party):** (UIN 68351) To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions she has had with businesses on levels of need for apprentices.

**Janet Daby:** Education is a devolved matter, and the response outlines the information for England only.

This government is transforming the apprenticeships offer into a new growth and skills offer, which will deliver greater flexibility to employers and learners and support the Industrial Strategy.

The development of the growth and skills offer is informed by Skills England's analysis and engagement. Skills England is working closely with employers, training providers and other stakeholders to identify priority skills gaps, helping to ensure that the levy-funded growth and skills offer meets the needs of businesses and helps to kick start economic growth.

## Department for Education: Universities: Antisemitism

**The Lord Bailey of Paddington (Conservative):** (HL9101) To ask His Majesty's Government, in regard to StandWithUs UK Report Voice of Students 2024/25, published on 7 May, what steps they are taking to support Jewish university students following increases in incidents of antisemitism on campuses.

**The Rt Hon. the Baroness Smith of Malvern:** The government is deeply concerned by the findings of the StandWithUs UK report.

Antisemitism is unacceptable, and universities must have robust policies and processes in place for preventing and tackling it. Whilst it is entirely right that universities protect freedom of speech and academic freedom on campus, this does not extend to hate, harassment or incitement. Last month, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education met with Vice Chancellors to discuss what more could be done to address the continued unacceptable level of antisemitism on our campuses.

From August 2025, the Office for Students' (OfS) new condition of registration for preventing, addressing and investigating incidents of harassment will take effect and universities will be held to account for their action. Furthermore, under the Prevent duty, the OfS monitors and evaluates whether universities and other higher education (HE) providers have due regard to the need to prevent people being drawn into terrorism.

The government is also investing £7 million to tackle antisemitism in education, including support for Jewish student welfare in HE, and remains committed to ensuring that all students can study in safety and dignity.

## Department for Education: Universities: Assessments

**The Rt Hon. the Lord Patten (Conservative):** (HL9344) To ask His Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Baroness Smith of Malvern on 8 July (HL8602), what plans they have, if any, to conduct a survey on the integrity of university examinations, including the use of examination adjustments arising from claims of self-assessed neurodivergence.

**The Rt Hon. the Baroness Smith of Malvern:** Universities have responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments for all their disabled students where necessary. Reasonable adjustments are offered at the discretion of the university based on an assessment of a student's individual needs.

In England, the management of university exams is guided by a combination of national regulatory bodies, university-specific policies and sector-wide frameworks.

The Office for Students (OfS) is the independent regulator for higher education in England. While it does not set specific exam rules, its conditions of registration ensure that universities maintain high academic standards and fair assessment practices. It requires institutions to uphold principles of fairness, transparency and accessibility in assessments.

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education provides the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, outlining expectations for academic standards and quality. This includes guidance on assessment design, marking and academic integrity.

Each university is autonomous and sets its own assessment regulations, including:

- Exam formats.
- Marking and grading criteria.

- Procedures for mitigating circumstances.
- Reasonable adjustments which a student might require.

The department does not have evidence which suggests that reasonable adjustments are impacting the integrity of exams or assessments and have no current plans to conduct a survey on the integrity of university examinations.

# Sector news

## Graduate Outcomes - HESA official statistics

On Thursday 17 July, the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) published accredited official statistics from the 2022/23 Graduate Outcomes survey, showing that 88% of UK graduates were in employment or further study 15 months after leaving higher education.

According to the data, 59% of graduates were in full-time employment - down slightly from the 61% reported in the previous two years but higher than during the COVID-impacted 2018/19 and 2019/20 cohorts. An additional 24% were in other forms of work, including part-time roles and combined work/study, while 6% were solely in further study. A further 6% were unemployed or engaged in other activities such as caring, travelling or retirement.

Among UK-based employed graduates, 76% were in high-skilled roles. This rose to 82% for science graduates, compared to 72% for those from non-science subjects.

The median salary for full-time UK-based employed graduates was £28,500 - an increase from £27,500 in the previous year. Science graduates earned a median of £29,498, while non-science graduates earned £27,998. Graduates from medicine and dentistry reported the highest median earnings (£37,924), with media, journalism and communications graduates earning the lowest (£24,925).

Female graduates were more likely to be in part-time roles and less likely to be unemployed than males. However, male graduates were more likely to report earnings above £33,000, while females were more represented below that threshold.

When asked about their post-graduation activities, 83% of UK undergraduates said their current activity felt meaningful. 74% said it aligned with their future plans, and 65% felt they were using knowledge from their studies.

The Graduate Outcomes survey is the UK's largest annual social survey, with 917,610 graduates eligible and 358,045 usable responses collected, a 39% response rate. The data includes breakdowns by subject, provider, and demographic characteristics, and is based on a new student data model used for the first time in 2022/23.

You can [read the full list of findings](#).

## Commission on Students in Higher Education - APPG for Students report

On 19 July, the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Students has released their Commission on Students in Higher Education.

The report identifies the urgent challenges facing universities today, as well as proposing solutions based on over 30 written submissions from students' unions, universities, sector bodies, and individual experts.

The APPG, chaired by Alex Sobel MP, identifies student poverty as one of the main challenges facing universities today. Students' financial situations and their ability to succeed in their studies are inherently linked; without proper financial support, they have to work long hours alongside their studies, meaning they cannot reach their full potential academically. This can have a lifelong impact on the jobs they are able to procure.

Other identified challenges include high cost of rents, mental ill-health, and a lack of teaching of employable skills.

The report includes a list of recommendations for both the government and universities over issues such as Access and Student Outcomes, High Quality Teaching, and Student Funding including:

- Implementing a stepped repayment model where graduates pay 2% on earnings between £12,570-£27,570 up to 8% of earnings of £57,571 or more. This system would have almost identical Exchequer costs but eliminates the most regressive features in the current fees and funding system.
- Reintroduce maintenance grants to ensure that low income students don't end up graduating with a higher debt burden.
- Increase maintenance funding in line with the cost of living annually, and ensure that student rent rises are less than this each year, moving towards a Student Minimum Income.
- Create a minimum student income linked to the living wage, which rises in line with inflation.
- Review and improve current mechanisms for determining the level of maintenance a student is entitled to (such as household income thresholds, and the age at which a student is considered to be independent).

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

## New HEPI report reveals the hidden impact of menstrual cycles on students' education

On 21 July, the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) released a new report highlighting the impact of menstruation on students' attendance, academic engagement and wellbeing in UK universities. Authored by Rose Stephenson, HEPI's Director of Policy and Advocacy, [The Hidden Impact of Menstrual Cycles on Higher Education Studies](#) the report is based on responses from over 1,500 students and interviews. The research shows that menstrual cycles affect attendance, assessments and placement opportunities for a large portion of the student body – yet most institutions lack formal policies to address these issues.

### Key findings:

- Only one-third of female students (33%) describe the education they received at school and college about menstrual cycles and periods as 'good' or 'very good'.
- Students who menstruate miss an average of 10 study days per academic year due to menstrual symptoms. For those with diagnosed menstrual health conditions, this increases to 19 days per year – equivalent to over 11 weeks of missed classes across a three-year degree.
- 70% of students who menstruate report being unable to concentrate on studies or assessments due to period pain, while 45% are affected by heavy menstrual bleeding. Conversely, 15% of respondents explained that there are days or weeks of their menstrual cycle when they experience a mental or physical 'boost' that increases their ability to focus or perform.
- One in six students who menstruate have experienced period poverty in the past year; nearly half of these missed classes as a result.
- Only 15% of universities offer any form of menstruation-related policy, and none of the surveyed institutions has policies that apply to students.

### Recommendations include:

- School and college curricula should be reviewed to ensure the delivery of comprehensive menstruation education, reflective of real-life experiences, to all pupils regardless of gender.
- Higher education providers should ensure that period products are freely available in multiple venues across campus.

- The Westminster Government (for England) and the Welsh Government should follow the lead of the Scottish Government and Northern Irish Executive by enshrining the right to access free period products for those who need them.

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

## Analysis of research integrity annual statements 2025

The UK Committee on Research Integrity and the Research Integrity Concordat Signatories (RICS) Group published a new analysis of annual research integrity statements from Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), Government departments, and Independent Research Organisations.

The report, conducted by Research Consulting, builds on a 2023 analysis and explores over two years of statements (2022–2024) produced under the *Concordat to Support Research Integrity*, which requires institutions to publish annual summaries of research integrity activities and misconduct investigations.

### Key findings from the report include:

- 78% of HEI annual statements were available for 2022/23 and 75% for 2023/24, maintaining consistency with previous years
- Increased use of the standardised annual statement template commissioned by the RICS Group
- Misconduct allegations most commonly related to failure to meet legal, ethical or professional obligations, plagiarism, and misrepresentation
- Established good practices are evident, with approaches tailored to institutional contexts, although monitoring and evaluation remain limited
- HEIs are actively responding to evolving challenges in the external research environment
- Government departments and other research organisations (e.g. labs, charities, cultural bodies) are becoming more engaged, though still produce fewer statements
- Government department statements tend to be streamlined and follow customised templates
- Non-HEI research organisations produce concise statements that address similar topics as HEIs

The project was supported by a strategic advisory group and included thematic deep dives and landscape scanning to identify emerging issues, best practices, and sector-wide trends.



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

## Conservative party reshuffle

Conservative party Leader Kemi Badenoch ended Parliament's summer term by announcing a [major switch up in her Shadow Cabinet](#) of about half a dozen changes this week. Making the headlines was the announcement that Sir James Cleverly will return to the frontbench as Shadow Housing Secretary.

Other appointments included: **Richard Holden** as Shadow Transport Secretary; **Julia Lopez** as Shadow Science Secretary; **Kevin Hollinrake** as Conservative Party Chair; **Nigel Huddleston** as Shadow Culture Secretary; **Neil O'Brien** in a new role as Shadow Minister for Policy Renewal and Development; **John Glen** as Badenoch's Parliamentary Private Secretary; and **Stuart Andrew** as Shadow Health Secretary. **Andrew** is replacing **Edward Argar**, who confirmed this week he would be stepping down from the Shadow Cabinet due to a health condition.

Previous Shadow Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology Alan Mak has resigned from his position after turning down an alternative role he was offered.

## OfS proposal - tighter control of subcontractual arrangements in higher education

On 22 July, the Office for Students (OfS) published proposals for new regulatory requirements aimed at improving oversight of subcontractual delivery in higher education, following a significant expansion of such arrangements across the sector.

A subcontractual arrangement involves a lead provider all or part of a course's delivery to another organisation (the delivery provider). The OfS has raised concerns about a lack of institutional control, risks to student experience, and potentially inappropriate use of student loan funding in some cases.

The proposed requirements would apply to any institution that has, or expects to have, 100 or more students enrolled on subcontracted courses in a single academic year.

Key proposals include:

- Introduce a new general ongoing condition of registration (condition E8)
- A 'governance and control' environment for subcontractual provision
- A provider to operate in accordance with the comprehensive source of information

- Power of direction
- Requirements for providers to provide specified information relating to subcontractual provision
- Monitoring compliance

The proposals are intended to increase transparency, improve student protection, and ensure that public funds are used appropriately across the sector.

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

## Research England funding budgets for 2025 to 2026

On 22 July, Research England published its funding allocations for the 2025–26 academic and financial year, confirming that core research and knowledge exchange budgets will remain flat in cash terms, while capital funding will decline overall.

Despite headline budgets holding steady, inflation means the sector will experience real-terms reductions, particularly in capital investment and some knowledge exchange streams. These decisions follow government and UKRI budget settlements announced in late 2024 and early 2025.

### Key announcements include:

- Quality-related research (QR) funding will remain frozen at £1.987bn
- Higher Education Innovation Funding (HEIF) is also held at £280m, with no cash increase
- Overall research funding slightly decreases from £2.170bn to £2.165bn
- Knowledge exchange funding drops from £328m to £313m, driven by a reduction in the Connecting Capability Fund (CCF-RED) from £28m to £9m
- The Research Capital Investment Fund (RCIF) falls from £233m to £174m
- This is partially offset by £59m in additional capital formula funding, reallocated from other financial year resources
- Funding for Enhancing Research Culture, Participatory Research, and the Policy Support Fund is maintained at current levels
- No new capital grants may be used for new infrastructure—funding must support maintenance and upkeep only
- The UK Research Partnership Investment Fund (UKRPIF) capital budget drops from £70m to £15m

Research England reaffirmed its commitment to dual support and the stability of research funding, while noting that future allocations may change based on government decisions.

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

## Contextualised HE Entry Track Impact Report

On 24 July 2025, the Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT) published its inaugural Contextualised HE Entry Track Impact Report, offering longitudinal insights into how intensive outreach influences progression to higher education for disadvantaged students in England.

The report explores two cohorts of outreach participants (over 280,000 students in total), tracked via HEAT member data, and links Key Stage 4 and 5 attainment with HE entry outcomes—addressing a long-standing gap in previous evaluations.

Key findings include:

- Students who engaged in an intensive outreach programme were up to 29% more likely to enter higher education at age 18 or 19, compared to a matched comparator group receiving minimal outreach
- The largest gains were observed for disadvantaged students - those eligible for free school meals saw up to a 48% increase in HE entry likelihood when participating in intensive outreach
- Uni Connect-funded outreach delivered the strongest relative impact for FSM-eligible students, outperforming interventions from high-tariff or non-high-tariff providers
- Students who received outreach spanning both Key Stages 4 and 5 had significantly higher HE entry rates - underscoring the value of sustained engagement across secondary education for FSM-eligible learners
- Participants of intensive outreach delivered by high-tariff institutions were up to 19% more likely to enter a selective HE provider compared to counterparts with minimal outreach

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

## OfS business plan - 2025-26

On 24 July, the Office for Students (OfS) has published its business plan for 2025-26.

The business plan sets out how the work of the OfS will benefit students, the institutions regulated by the OfS, and taxpayers more widely. It continues the implementation of the recommendations in the independent public bodies review of the OfS.

**During this business plan year, the OfS will:**

- Protect the interests of students through a refreshed approach to quality and strengthened protection for students' consumer rights. The OfS will develop and consult on an integrated approach to quality which supports continuous improvement, ensuring students can be confident that they will receive good teaching on well resourced courses which leave them prepared for life after graduation. A focus on consumer protection – including a consultation on new regulatory requirements for institutions – will mean students are treated fairly and understand the routes for redress where they encounter problems.
- Support English higher education through financially challenging times, with sector-level analysis and careful monitoring of financial performance for individual institutions. A renewed collaborative focus on effective governance will ensure the sector is better equipped to navigate future challenges. The OfS will also reopen for applications for registration, degree awarding powers and university title from August 2025.
- Work with the Department for Education (DfE) and the Student Loans Company to protect taxpayers' investment in higher education. This will include introducing new initial conditions of registration for institutions looking to join the OfS Register, and consulting on new ongoing requirements to ensure all universities and colleges have robust control of their partnership arrangements.

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

## **How Universities Can Help Drive Local and Regional Economies - report by Institute of Economic Development and AtkinsRéalis**

On 24 July, the Institute of Economic Development (iED) and AtkinsRéalis launched a new insight report placing universities at the centre of strategies for local and regional economic growth with national impact.

The report, aimed at economic development practitioners, explores how universities - through collaboration with local government and business - can help address

productivity gaps, regional disparities, and long-term economic resilience through innovation-led place-based growth.

Drawing on UK case studies from Edinburgh and South East Scotland, Greater Manchester, Lincolnshire, and White City London - alongside international examples such as 22@Barcelona the report highlights best practice and makes several recommendations to government.

**Key findings and recommendations include:**

- Universities should be formally recognised and supported as anchor institutions in regional growth strategies
- Stronger economic partnerships are needed between universities, local authorities, and businesses to develop innovation districts and regional ecosystems
- Government must provide policy direction, capacity-building support, and funding to incentivise economic development through higher education
- A new model of Industrial Strategy Action Zones could be built around innovation networks at universities
- Plentiful revenue funding is critical to maintain and grow regional economic ecosystems
- The national government must offer strategic alignment, resourcing and cultural incentives to embed long-term collaboration between academia, business and government
- Universities' contributions to research, innovation, skills and inward investment should be central to national economic policy

The report also supports the “triple helix” model - bringing together government, business and academia while acknowledging that more needs to be done to align institutional agendas and overcome delivery barriers.

You can read the full report.