



All-Party Parliamentary University Group

Weekly update

21 – 25 October 2024

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

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Parliamentary business

Home Office oral questions

On Monday 21 October, the Secretary of State for the Home Department, Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP, and her ministerial colleagues answered questions in the House of Commons. During topical questions, there was a question on antisemitism in higher education:

Jon Pearce MP (Labour): UK universities have experienced a fivefold increase in antisemitic incidents since the 7 October terrorist attacks. At a recent meeting of the Union of Jewish Students, I heard distressing examples of the Iranian regime organising on our campuses and stirring up hatred against Jewish students. Can the Minister tell the House what steps the Department is taking to deal with the threat posed by Tehran here on British soil?

Minister for Security, Dan Jarvis MP: We have been clear that the behaviour of the Iranian regime, including the actions of the IRGC, poses a threat to the safety and security of the UK and our allies. The Government continually assess threats to the UK and take the protection of individuals' rights, freedoms and safety incredibly seriously, wherever those threats may originate.

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

Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (Transfer of Functions etc) Bill – HoL second reading

On Tuesday 22 October, the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (Transfer of Functions etc) Bill received its second reading in the House of Lords. Skills Minister Rt Hon Baroness Smith of Malvern linked the Bill to the government's growth mission, stating that in order to succeed in the mission the country needed to harness the talent of its people, meet business' skills needs and break down barriers to opportunity.

She gave statistics on the country's skills gaps and highlighted that levels of technical skills at levels 4 and 5 were very low compared with other countries. Baroness Smith

reiterated the links between Skills England and the Industrial Strategy, the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) and the Department for Work and Pensions' drive to get Britain working.

One change (Clauses 4 and 5) in the IfATE powers that are being transferred to the Secretary of State relates to the need for a 'group of persons' to approve apprenticeship assessment plans and occupational standards. Employer involvement would still be the default position, but the Secretary of State could now make quicker changes, improving the agility in the system. Clause 8 would allow Ofqual to apply its accreditation power to specified technical qualification types where the Secretary of State deems appropriate. Baroness Smith later added, "it will become possible for the full suite of regulatory options to be applied to them, helping to put them on an even footing with other academic and vocational qualifications. "

There were few substantial mentions of higher education in the second reading debate, although Lord Watson of Invergowrie (Labour) stressed that universities should be key partners for Skills England due to the growing need for higher level skills as evidenced by Skills England's own report. He asked what role the government saw for universities working with the new body to which the Minister said, "we certainly believe that it [higher education] has an important role to play in this partnership with Skills England".

The Lord Bishop of Leeds was critical about the current trend of apprenticeship levy funding going to higher or degree level apprenticeships which "helps higher education institutions".

There was criticism from some Peers, including Baroness Evans (Conservative) that the list of responsibilities set out for Skills England earlier in the year, including working with bodies such as the MAC and FE and HE bodies, was not included on the face of the Bill. Baroness Finn (Conservative) warned that anything other than an entirely demand-led skills system would not work, expressing concerns that Skills England could become a 'centralised skills planner'.

Baroness Garden (Lib Dem) spoke about the need for more flexible lifelong learning options, particularly policy and funding interventions that would increase flexibility in higher education provision.

The Earl of Effingham (Conservative) highlighted the example of BAE Systems' apprenticeship programmes from levels 4 to 7 which had hugely increased in number. He praised the University of Portsmouth's degree apprenticeship in space systems engineering in partnership with BAE Systems.

In answer to questions about the relationship between Skills England and the DfE, Baroness Smith said she anticipates the relationship between the two to be set out in a publicly available format and updated periodically.

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

You can [read UUK's briefing](#).

Renters Rights Bill – HoC committee stage

On Tuesday 22 October, MPs heard oral evidence during committee stage of the Renters Rights Bill. The committee heard evidence from a range of stakeholders including the student housing charity Unipol and the National Residential Landlords Association (NRLA).

Both Unipol and NRLA raised concerns about the potential impact of the Bill on supply of student accommodation in the private rental sector. The NRLA called on the government to re-introduce a moratorium period that was brought under the previous Bill which would mean tenants could not give two months' notice to leave in the first four months of a tenancy. This would give landlords the security of at least six months rental income. They argued that this moratorium would help further protect the annual cyclical model of student tenancies, would protect set-up costs for landlords and prevent the loss of properties from the student rental market.

In their evidence, Unipol called for the creation of a specific form of student tenancy for use in the private rental sector, which would offer a fixed term. They outlined the differences in how student housing operates from the rest of the private rental sector, and the need for special attention to this group of renters. They explained that a fixed-term tenancy for students would allow landlords to regain possession but provide the security of a fixed term to students, as well as benefits for students that address their specific needs. For example, landlords should not be able to demand guarantors for students. Unipol stated that this practice is restrictive and 'difficult' for students from low-income backgrounds. They also recommend that under this form of student tenancy, students should be able to give notice in certain circumstances, such as if they have left their course.

Minister of State for Housing and Planning, Matthew Pennycook MP, said that the government has narrowed the grounds for possession that was introduced in the previous Bill in an attempt to capture a typical student rather than a non-typical

student, such as an adult learner with children who is living in a more non-typical student property. He asked if there are ways to tweak this to make it more suitable for all students. He also asked why students are being asked to sign tenancies well in advance of the start of the academic year and how this practice could be stopped. Unipol welcomed the new ground for possession for student landlords but called on the government to revise its definition of HMOs to include one and two-bedroom properties. They noted that excluding one and two-bedroom properties is problematic, because they account for a large part of the student housing market. If students living in one and two-bedroom properties can have an open-ended tenancy and give notice at any point, they may choose to give notice in January when there is no demand for students, and that property could then leave the cycle of the student lettings and go into the professional market. They went on to state that in Newcastle and Preston for example, over 50% of the properties advertised are one- and two-bedroom properties. Losing these properties from the student housing market would be very problematic. Regarding the question about cooling-off periods and early renting, Unipol stated that shortages in accommodation in many cities across the country has led to increased competition for housing which means students often try to secure accommodation earlier and earlier to 'beat the market'. Unipol have suggested that if students had the ability to cancel tenancy agreements up to four months before the tenancy was due to begin, it would stop early renting.

When asked how often landlords might need to use the new ground for possession, Unipol stated that it would be used very rarely as the need for student housing is cyclical and generally most students will move out after their course has finished. They highlighted that the more problematic thing that will stop the cyclical nature of student housing, is the ability of students to give two months' notice. Most landlords deal with their tenancies on a 12-month cycle, and they set their rents on an annual basis. The Bill as currently drafted will allow students to give notice as early as April or May, which could result in landlords raising rents to cover void periods. Unipol went on to state that the government should conduct an impact assessment of the Bill on the student market, particularly in light of similar tenure changes in Scotland and the impact of those changes on student homelessness.

Unipol also suggested alternatives to creating a new form of student tenancy, if the government does not adopt this proposal. They suggested an accreditation scheme or certification for student landlords in the private rental sector. This would enable landlords who are part of a quality mark to offer fixed-term tenancies similar to those available in purpose-built student accommodation. This would offer students good quality housing provided by landlords who are accountable. It would also provide landlords with certainty in their business planning.



Unipol highlighted the problematic nature of joint tenancies in that if one tenant gives notice, all the other tenants, in theory, could be asked to leave at the same time. Typically, the remaining tenants are liable for the rent on the room that has been vacated, and it is very difficult for landlords to backfill, so the remaining tenants may find that the rent increases. Unless there is an ability to have a fixed term, then this is going to cause a great deal of disruption. Unipol also highlighted the problems that could arise from only allowing landlords to gain possession of a property between June and September. They noted that some universities can have five different points in the year when you can start a degree or a Master's programme. They asked for more flexibility in the Bill to give landlords the ability to regain possession of a student property at different points in the year.

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

You can [read UUK's briefing](#).

Forthcoming business

Renters Rights Bill – HoC committee stage

On Tuesday 29 and Thursday 31 October, the Renters Rights Bill will be debated at committee stage.

You can [read more](#) and watch the sessions:

- [Tuesday 29 October, 9:25am](#)
- [Tuesday 29 October, 2:00pm](#)
- [Thursday 31 October, 11:30am](#)
- [Thursday 31 October, 2:00pm](#)

Reducing the number of young people not in employment, education, or training – HoL oral question

On Tuesday 29 October, there will be an oral question in the House of Lords on reducing the number of young people not in employment, education, or training. This question was tabled by The Lord Bishop of Newcastle (Bishops).

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

Budget Statement

On Wednesday 30 October from approximately 12:30pm, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rt Hon Rachel Reeves MP, will deliver the Budget Statement.

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

Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill – HoC committee stage

On Tuesday 29 and Thursday 31 October, the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill will be debated at committee stage.

You can [read more](#) and watch the sessions:

- [Tuesday 29 October, 9:25am](#)
- [Tuesday 29 October, 2:00pm](#)
- [Thursday 31 October, 11:30am](#)
- [Thursday 31 October, 2:00pm](#)

The contribution of science and technology to the UK economy – HoL debate

On Thursday 31 October, there will be a House of Lords debate on the contribution of science and technology to the UK economy. This debate was tabled by Viscount Stansgate (Labour).

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

Written questions and statements

Innovate UK

Adam Thompson MP (Labour): To ask the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, what steps he has taken to encourage collaboration between business and universities to increase economic growth. [UIN 8267]

Minister for Industry, Sarah Jones MP: The Government encourages university-business collaboration through a range of incentives, funding and knowledge exchange. The Higher Education Innovation Fund, managed through Research England, providing £280m annually for knowledge exchange, including £20m specifically for business and commercialisation activity.

The Government has also established Skills England, which is tasked with identifying and articulating the skills needed while working with other actors in the skills system to ensure provision is aligned with our industrial strategy. We are building a flexible and high-quality system that breaks down the barriers to opportunity and drives growth.

Students: Fees and Charges

Jim Shannon MP (DUP): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of the current level of tuition fees. [UIN 8142]

Minister for Children and Families, Janet Daby MP: Education is a devolved matter, and this response outlines the information for England only.

The government is determined that the higher education (HE) funding system should deliver for our economy, for universities and for students. The department will look carefully at all options and come forward with proposals. Funding plans for the HE sector will be set out at the relevant fiscal event in line with the approach to public spending commitments across government.

The department recognises the immediate financial strain that some providers are under. As such, the department will continue to work closely with the Office for

Students to monitor any risks and to ensure there are robust plans in place to mitigate them.

Universities: Technology

Blake Stephenson MP (Conservative): To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he plans to take to support the development of tech clusters for specialist universities. [UIN 8702]

Minister for AI and Digital Government, Feryal Clark MP: The UK tech ecosystem achieved a record combined market valuation of \$1.08 trillion in 2023. Supporting its continued development across the UK is a priority for my department, and vital to this government's mission to kickstart economic growth.

As set out in the industrial strategy consultation, the UK has world-leading innovation and tech clusters across the country. This includes aviation technology around Cranfield, with Cranfield University acting as a magnet for talent and investment and anchor institution for its local innovation ecosystem.

Through the industrial strategy, we will explore how best to continue supporting high-potential clusters across the UK through R&D investment.

Universities: Research

Baroness Barran (Conservative): To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to encourage more specialisation in universities between research and teaching. [UIN HL1158]

Minister for Skills, Baroness Smith of Malvern: Higher education providers are independent of government and, as such, are responsible for deciding on effective business models. The department would expect individual providers to consider the right balance between teaching and research activity, according to their strategies and business models.

Students: Loans

Lord Johnson of Marylebone (Conservative): To ask His Majesty's Government, with reference to the review of the student finance system, (1) what steps they are taking to reduce opportunities for systemic and organised fraud identified by the National Audit Office and Public Accounts Committee; and (2) what was the rationale for paying postgraduate master's loans of up to £12,471 directly to students themselves rather than to universities, as is the practice with loans for undergraduate study. [UIN HL1240]

Minister for Skills, Baroness Smith of Malvern: The government's response to the report from the Public Account Committee (PAC) into student loans issued to those studying at franchised higher education providers was published on 5 September 2024. This is attached and can also be viewed here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66d9d2bfe87ad2f12182650e/E03194725_HMT_Treasury_Minutes_Sept_24_Accessible.pdf. The response sets out how the government is implementing the PAC recommendations including greater collaboration between the Department for Education, the Office for Students and the Student Loans Company to tackle risks to public money swiftly and decisively. The response, which also addresses the National Audit Office's recommendations, confirms that the government intends to consult on proposals to strengthen oversight of partnership delivery in higher education by January 2025.

The postgraduate master's loan is a contribution to the student's costs of study. It can be used by students, according to their personal circumstances, to cover tuition fees which may be lower than the amount of the loan, living costs and/or other course related costs. This flexibility would not be available were the loan paid directly to the provider.

Students: Finance

Baroness Lister of Burtersett (Labour): To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of (1) the potential impacts of reintroducing non-repayable maintenance grants for higher education students from disadvantaged backgrounds; and (2) the potential benefits of funding university students to deliver targeted tutoring to disadvantaged school pupils. [UIN HL1261]

Minister for Skills, Baroness Smith of Malvern: The government is determined that the higher education (HE) funding system should deliver for the economy, for

universities and for students and will look carefully at all options and come forward with proposals.

Funding plans for the HE sector will be set out at the relevant fiscal event, in line with the approach to public spending commitments across government.

All HE providers registered with the Office for Students (OfS), that intend to charge higher fees, must have an Access and Participation Plan (APP) approved by the OfS. These need to set out the underrepresented groups they will support and the ways that they will do so. Interventions can include tutoring disadvantaged students in the local area, but also activities such as academy sponsorship, outreach, summer schools and student bursaries. HE providers are expected to evaluate their interventions to demonstrate effectiveness.

Overseas Students

Lord Reid of Cardowan (Labour): To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking (1) to encourage international students to pursue higher education in this country, and (2) to develop post-graduation opportunities for these students. [UIN HL1300]

Minister for Skills, Baroness Smith of Malvern: The government recognises that international students enrich university campuses, forge lifelong friendships with domestic students and become global ambassadors for the UK, as well as making a significant economic contribution to the higher education sector and the UK.

The UK has four universities in the top 10 globally and 15 in the top 100, and offers international students the opportunity to live and work in the UK on a graduate visa for two to three years after their studies come to an end.

In my right hon. Friend's, the Secretary of State for the Home Department, Written Ministerial Statement on 30 July, it was confirmed that the government has maintained the reduced salary thresholds on the Skilled Worker visa route. Reduced salary thresholds make it easier for employers to recruit new entrants to the labour market, such as international students, post-graduation, on a Skilled Worker visa.

The department fully expects the UK to remain a highly attractive study destination to international students.

Students: Loans

Baroness Barran (Conservative): To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of whether it is possible to reduce the monthly repayments for every single new graduate without increasing government borrowing or general taxation. [UIN HL1159; Grouped Question: HL1157]

Minister for Skills, Baroness Smith of Malvern: The government is determined that the higher education (HE) funding system should deliver for the economy, for universities, and for students and will look carefully at all options and come forward with proposals.

Funding plans for the HE sector will be set out at the relevant fiscal event, in line with the approach to public spending commitments across government.

Visas: Students

Tom Hayes MP (Labour): To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to review the self-employment restriction on student visas. [UIN 9879; Grouped Question: 9875]

Minister for Migration and Citizenship, Seema Malhotra MP: All students applying to study within the UK are required to demonstrate that they have sufficient funds to support themselves financially throughout their studies.

Working hour limits are in place to ensure students have sufficient time to devote to their main purpose coming to the UK: to study. We currently have no plans to increase these working hour limits. There are alternative routes available for individuals who wish to come to the UK to work.

Students are not currently permitted to be self-employed or engage in business activity. There are currently no plans to change this policy.

Universities: Admissions

Jim Shannon MP (DUP): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to encourage boys to apply for university. [UIN 9167]

Minister for Children and Families, Janet Daby MP: Education is a devolved matter, and the response outlines the information for England only.

The department will support the aspiration of every person who meets the requirements and wants to go to university, regardless of their background and personal characteristics. Access to higher education (HE) should be based on ability and attainment. Opportunity should be available to all and it is our aspiration that no groups are left behind.

It is critical that both boys and girls are supported with good advice, quality options and fair and transparent processes which ensure there are no barriers to them accessing high quality courses suited to their ability, interests and aspirations.

The department expects schools and colleges to provide a stable, structured careers programme in line with the Gatsby Benchmarks. The Benchmarks include a clear expectation that every pupil should meet providers of the full range of learning opportunities, including universities. By the age of 18, all pupils who are considering applying for university should have had at least two visits to universities to meet staff and pupils

All English HE providers that are registered with the Office for Students (OfS) and intend to charge higher fees must have an access and participation plan (APP) approved by the OfS. APPs should set out how a university or college will challenge risks to equality of opportunity in HE and include the underrepresented groups it will support. HE providers should refer to the Equality of Opportunity Risk Register published by the OfS when considering risk. They should also consider other local risks based on available evidence to address areas of under-representation.

UCAS has introduced reforms to the admissions application form to increase transparency and improve clarity around the process. These include a new academic reference for the 2024 cycle, a new entry grades tool for the 2025 cycle and personal statement reform. These changes aim to enable students to make informed, ambitious choices and ensure universities hear from students in their own words.

Erasmus+ Programme:

Alex Easton MP (Independent): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of rejoining the Erasmus+ programme.
[UIN 8904]

Minister for Children and Families, Janet Daby MP: Education is a devolved matter, and the response outlines the information for England only.

Following their meeting in Brussels on 2 October, the President of the European Commission and my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister have agreed to strengthen the relationship between the EU and UK, putting it on a more solid, stable footing. The government will now work with the EU to identify areas where it can strengthen co-operation for mutual benefit, such as the economy, energy, security and resilience.

The government recognises and supports the benefits of collaborating with its international partners on education. The department is working with the higher education sector to ensure our world leading universities continue to attract outstanding students from around the world and support our economy. However, we have no plans for rejoining the Erasmus+ Programme.

Higher Education: Freedom of Expression

Rupert Lowe MP (Reform UK): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to protect free speech for students in higher education.
[UIN 9298]

Minister for Children and Families, Janet Daby MP: This government is absolutely committed to freedom of speech and academic freedom. Higher education (HE) must be a space for robust discussion and intellectual rigour. This is outlined in the existing legislation, whereby universities have a legal obligation to protect lawful freedom of speech, and protections for free speech are also set out in the Office for Students' registration conditions.

The government took the decision to pause the implementation of further parts of the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act to ensure that it is workable in practice and that it protects freedom of speech for students.

The department is continuing to meet with a full range of stakeholders, including academics with concerns about constraints on freedom of speech and mission groups representing the voice of students in HE. This will feed into decision making on the future of the Act and this government's longer-term policy on protecting freedom of speech across the HE sector.

Universities: Student Numbers

Andrew Rosindell MP (Conservative): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a cap on student numbers per university, in the context of recent trends in the availability of student housing. [UIN 9146]

Minister for Children and Families, Janet Daby MP: Student accommodation is a busy part of the housing market, and this government recognises the concerns that some students may have about the availability of accommodation. As universities and landlords are private, autonomous bodies, the government has no role in student admissions or the provision of student accommodation, nor a remit to intervene in how it is allocated.

Nevertheless, the department is working with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to promote the importance of a strategic approach to meeting student housing needs to providers and local authorities.

The department expects universities and private landlords to review their accommodation policies to ensure they are affordable, fair, clear and promote the interests of students.

Entry Clearances: Overseas Students

Lord Hodgson of Astley Abbotts (Conservative): To ask His Majesty's Government what impact the changes to student visa routes introduced in January, which prevent international students studying on undergraduate courses bringing family members to the UK, have had on visa application numbers. [UIN HL1458]

Minister of State, Lord Hanson of Flint: The Home Office publishes information on monthly Sponsored Study visa applications in the 'Monthly entry clearance visa applications release'.

[Monthly entry clearance visa applications - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)]

Data on Sponsored Study visa applications from main applicants and dependants can be found in the accompanying dataset.

[Monthly monitoring of entry clearance visa applications - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)].

The Home Office also publishes quarterly data on Sponsored Study visas in the 'Immigration Statistics Quarterly Release' [Immigration system statistics quarterly release - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)]. Data on visa applications, by applicant type and nationality, are published in table Vis_D01 of 'Entry clearance visas granted outside the UK' [Immigration system statistics data tables - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)]. Information on how to use the dataset can be found in the 'Notes' page of the workbook. The latest data relates to Q2 (April to July) 2024.

Information on future Home Office statistical release dates can be found in the 'Research and statistics calendar' [immigration - Research and statistics - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)].

Research: Publishing

Fabian Hamilton MP (Labour): To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, if he will hold discussions with universities on the value for money of their contracts with academic publishers for (a) journal subscriptions and (b) open-access publishing. [UIN 9904]

Minister for AI and Digital Government, Feryal Clark MP: Jisc is an independent nonprofit company that supports universities with the transition to open access. It does this through negotiating a range of transitional open access agreements and institutional access to journal publications. These agreements enable UK research output to be published open access in accordance with UK funder policies.

Jisc will negotiate new agreements with publishers on behalf of the sector in 2025. This will focus on pace of change to open access models, the financial sustainability of agreements, and equity to enable a wider audience to benefit including researchers, small specialist institutions and public health organisations.

Sector news

October 2024 Budget representation – University Alliance publication

On Tuesday 22 October, University Alliance published its asks for the October 2024 Budget and 2025/26 Departmental Expenditure Limits.

Key asks include:

1. Address financial shortfalls for higher education students

- The government should increase student maintenance support. It is vital that maintenance entitlements and parental income thresholds are updated to widen support to more families. Means-tested maintenance grants should be reinstated to end the perverse phenomenon of the least well-off students graduating with the most debt.

2. Address public sector recruitment and retention

- Implementing manifesto commitments to spend £450m extra per year on recruiting new teachers and to review the way bursaries are allocated. The government should work with the higher education sector to design incentives that can help reverse under-recruitment, as well as improve retention.
- Ensuring universal geographical coverage of teacher training opportunities is maintained by adding an additional phase to the Initial Teacher Training (ITT) market review accreditation process to allow for “near miss” providers to achieve accreditation.
- Convening a cross-government health education task force, established well before the conclusion of the 2025 Spending Review, to coordinate delivery of the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan (LTWP) and urgently identify a package of student recruitment and early career retention incentives.

3. Give universities greater flexibility to set their pension arrangements

- This can be done by reviewing HE participation in the Teachers’ Pension Scheme, and removing the requirement for higher education corporations in

England to offer access to the Local Government Pension Scheme to new employees.

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

Trade Secretary launches new fund to unlock multi-billion exports boost – DBT press release

On Wednesday 23 October, the Department for Business and Trade (DBT) announced a new £2.3million Regulatory Partnership for Growth Fund to help to unlock export opportunities worth nearly £5 billion for UK companies over five years.

This fund will support UK regulators who will aim to improve the process for accreditation of UK education programmes, such as university degrees, in countries all over the world, including Malaysia.

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

Widening participation in higher education: 2024 – DfE statistics

On Thursday 24 October, the Department for Education (DfE) published annual statistics on young people's participation in higher education, including their background characteristics.

Key facts and figures from the data include:

- Free School Meals (FSM) eligible HE progression rate was 29.0% - down for the first time in the series
- The gap in progression rates between FSM eligible and non-FSM eligible pupils has increased to the highest level recorded of 20.8pp
- Black pupils have seen the greatest increase in the proportion entering HE since 2009/10, however the rate has fallen in the latest year to 62.4%

You can [explore the data](#).

Progression to higher education or training 2022/23 – DfE statistics

On Thursday 24 October, the Department for Education (DfE) published data showing the percentage of level 3 pupils continuing to a sustained education or training destination at level 4 or higher in the two years after completing 16 to 18 study. The latest data in this release covers students who left 16 to 18 study in 2020/21.

You can [explore the data](#).

University admissions and A level attainment in 2017 and 2018: the role of unconditional offers – Ofqual report

On Thursday 24 October, Ofqual published research into the potential impact of unconditional university offers on students' A level attainment.

The research found that, when controlling for student background characteristics that are linked to A level performance, there is a relationship between accepting an unconditional offer as a firm choice and overall A level attainment. A student holding an unconditional offer as a firm choice achieves, on average, between half and three quarters of a grade lower across their 3 A levels than a student not holding an unconditional offer as a firm choice.

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

Student Demand to 2035 – HEPI report

On Thursday 24 October, the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) published a report showing reductions in student demand in England, which are already affecting the higher education sector, will cause serious problems as the number of 18-year-olds in the population declines after 2030.

Key findings include:

- After steadily increasing over the past two decades, the participation rate in England has gone into reverse in the past two years.



- Unless the participation rate resumes its improvement, overall demand for higher education would fall by up to 20% between 2030 and 2040 due to a projected sharp decline in the young population.
- There remains a wide gap between male and female participation. Given there are consistently 5% more boys are born than girls, it would take a 37% increase in male participation to match that of female.

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