



All-Party Parliamentary University Group

Weekly update

23 – 27 March 2026

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

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



Parliamentary business	4
Home Office - Oral Questions	4
Written questions and statements	6
Department for Work and Pensions: Employment Schemes: Young People	6
Department for Education: Students: Loans	6
Department for Education: Students: Radicalism	7
Department for Education: Students: Loans	8
Department for Education: Students: Finance	9
Department for Education: Visas: Sudan	9
Department for Education: Higher Education: Artificial Intelligence	10
Department for Education: Students: Loans	11
Department for Education: Higher Education: Radicalism	11
Department for Education: Universities: Admissions	12
Department for Education: Students: Loans	13
Department for Education: Students: Loans	13
Department for Education: Higher Education: Radicalism	14
Department for Education: Higher Education: Radicalism	14
Department for Education: Higher Education: Radicalism	15
Department for Education: School Leaving: Apprenticeships	16
Department for Education: Higher Education: Radicalism	16
Department for Education: Students: Loans	17
Department for Education: Higher Education: Finance	17
Department for Education: Students: Loans	18
Department for Education: Students: Loans	19
Department for Education: Students: Loans	19
Department for Education: Higher Education: Finance	20
Department for Education: Higher Education: Radicalism	21
Department for Education: Overseas Students: Loans	21
Department for Education: Further Education	22
Department for Education: Overseas Students: Student Wastage	23

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Chevening Scholarships Programme	24
Home Office: Asylum: Overseas Students	25
Home Office: Refugees: Visas	26
Department for Work and Pensions: Social Security Benefits: Higher Education	27
Home Office: Overseas Students: Afghanistan	28
Home Office: Refugees	28
Home Office: Refugees: Resettlement	29
Department for Education: Higher Education: Radicalism	29
Department for Education: Higher Education: Islamophobia	30
Home Office: Visas: Overseas Students	30
Department for Education: Erasmus+ Programme	31
<hr/>	
Sector news	33
<hr/>	
English Social Mobility Index Results – HEPI	33
UCEA and UUK send a joint letter to Helen Hayes MP, Chair of the Westminster Education Committee	33
Franchise arrangements for higher education providers – DfE guidance	34
Investment in research infrastructure - House of Commons Public Accounts Committee	35
The long shadow - How childhood disadvantage depresses the earnings of university graduates in England – Resolute Foundation report	35
Healthier Communities 2030 – Russel Group	36
OfS publishes new research on how prepared students feel for life after university or college	37
Advance HE - 2025 Student Equality Data Dashboards	38
New HEPI Policy Note calls for sustained and intensive outreach to tackle persistent higher education access gaps.	38
Working group to advise OfS on development of statement of expectations around foreign interference	39

Parliamentary business

Home Office - Oral Questions

On Monday 23 March, at 2.30pm, the Secretary of State for the Home Department, Rt Hon Shabana Mahmood MP, and her ministerial colleagues answered oral questions in the House of Commons.

Relevant questions included:

Siân Berry (Green Party):

What discussions she has had with Cabinet colleagues on the potential impact of the introduction of the visa brake on Chevening scholars.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, Mike Tapp:

We have discussed the introduction of visa brakes across Government, including the impact on Chevening scholars. Chevening scholarships continue to attract and support exceptional future leaders across the globe, and will continue to do so. Restoring order and control to our system is a top priority. Through the visa brake we are acting quickly and decisively to address high numbers and proportions of visa-linked asylum claims. By the year ending September 2025, asylum applications from students from Afghanistan, Cameroon, Myanmar and Sudan had risen to over 470% of their 2021 level.

Siân Berry:

Including prestigious Chevening scholarships in the Government's clampdown on certain study visas is devastating for those who have been shortlisted, including students who are set to join our world-leading programmes at Sussex University. It raises questions about the value that the Government put on nurturing talent, particularly for women from Afghanistan, from whom I have seen heartbreaking accounts of terminated applications. Will the Minister and the Home Secretary urgently revisit that decision?

Mike Tapp:

I have laid out the concerns, and the reasons for this brake. For example, 93% of those coming over from Afghanistan as students are claiming asylum. The Green party may well want open borders; that is not what we stand for. We stand for

control and order, but, at the same time, compassion. That is exactly why we are looking at safe and legal routes, while working to control the borders.

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

Written questions and statements

Department for Work and Pensions: Employment Schemes: Young People

Callum Anderson (Labour) (Buckingham and Bletchley): (121226) To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what monitoring arrangements are in place to evaluate whether the Jobs Guarantee achieves its target of providing six-month paid employment opportunities for all eligible 18–24-year-olds.

Andrew Western (Labour) (Stretford and Urmston): We have previously set out our approach for monitoring arrangements and expected outputs for Phase One of the Jobs Guarantee in the response I gave on 9 February 2026 to Question UIN [109869](#).

For the national rollout of the Jobs Guarantee, the scheme will be available to all eligible 18–24-year-olds. We will use learning from Phase One to inform and establish appropriate outcome and performance monitoring arrangements. This will ensure we are delivering the scheme as intended for all eligible young people.

[Source](#)

Department for Education: Students: Loans

David Reed (Conservative) (Exmouth and Exeter East): (119775) To ask the Secretary of State for Education, a) what is the current RAB charge for Plan 2 loans, and b) how has this changed year-on-year since 2019.

Josh MacAlister (Labour) (Whitehaven and Workington): The current Resource Accounting and Budgeting (RAB) charge for Plan 2 loans in England is 32.2%. The RAB charge for Plan 2 loans has changed as follows since 2019:

?

RAB charges (Financial Year) Plan 2

2019/20	53.0%
2020/21	54.0%

2021/22	45.0%
2022/23	28.5%
2023/24	29.8%
2024/25	32.2%

Many factors can influence the RAB charge, including modelling methodology, economic determinants and policy decisions. The last cohort of Plan 2 loan borrowers took their first loans in the 2022/23 academic year, the latest RAB charge covers outlay for borrowers still receiving Plan 2 loans in the 2024/25 financial year.

Source

Department for Education: Students: Radicalism

Chris Philp (Conservative) (Croydon South): (119377) To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential implications for her policies of potential foreign state ideological influence operating through student networks affiliated to UK universities.

Josh MacAlister (Labour) (Whitehaven and Workington): This government is committed to freedom of speech and academic freedom within the law, but those freedoms do not extend to behaviour that constitutes extremist intimidation, harassment and incitement to hatred.

The National Security Act 2023 introduced offences of foreign interference which target malign activity carried out for, on behalf of, or intended to benefit, a foreign power.

In addition, the Foreign Influence Registration Scheme, applies to UK universities and students. Any person conducting political influence activity at the direction of any foreign country, or being directed by the Russian or Iranian states to conduct activity in the UK, must register.

We are committed to ensuring our universities remain free from interference. We announced a new Academic Interference Reporting Route and issued guidance at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/protecting-uk-higher-education-from-foreign-interference> to help students and staff identify and escalate issues.

We will be investing £3 million to bolster support and advice on foreign interference for the sector.

Source

Department for Education: Students: Loans

David Reed (Conservative) (Exmouth and Exeter East): (119778) To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate her Department has made of the proportion of Plan 2 borrowers graduating between 2016 and 2023 whose total lifetime student loan repayments, including interest, are projected to exceed the net present value of the graduate earnings premium attributable to their degree.

Josh MacAlister (Labour) (Whitehaven and Workington): The department does not hold estimates of lifetime repayment costs for Plan 2 borrowers by earnings bands.

The Autumn Budget included freezes to Plan 2 repayment and interest thresholds for at their 2026/27 financial year level until April 2030, when they will increase annually by inflation.

The following analysis of the impact of freezing the repayment and interest thresholds to aid the decision:

?

Average Lifetime repayments (2024/25 financial year prices)

Baseline	Policy	Impact			
		£	£	£	%
Entire cohort		£27,000	£28,300	£1,300	5%
Average					
	1	£2,000	£2,000	£0	0%
Lifetime graduate earnings decile	2	£4,300	£4,700	£400	9%
	3	£7,700	£8,100	£400	5%

4	£11,600	£13,000	£1,400	12%
5	£16,900	£18,500	£1,600	9%
6	£23,100	£25,200	£2,100	9%
7	£31,300	£33,600	£2,300	7%
8	£41,200	£43,500	£2,300	6%
9	£54,500	£56,100	£1,600	3%
10	£59,100	£59,500	£400	1%

We also do not hold the proportion of borrowers projected to repay of their student loan than the graduate earnings premium attributable to their degree.

Grouped Questions: 119777

Source

Department for Education: Students: Finance

Ben Coleman (Labour) (Chelsea and Fulham): (119774) To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if her Department will introduce supplementary grants for students from disadvantaged backgrounds who seek to participate in Erasmus + projects in line with the provision in other associated countries.

Josh MacAlister (Labour) (Whitehaven and Workington): As set out in the Erasmus+ Programme Guide, additional funding is available for participants with fewer opportunities, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, to support them to travel abroad on an Erasmus+ placement.

Source

Department for Education: Visas: Sudan

Anneliese Dodds (Labour) (Oxford East): (119438) To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions she had with Cabinet colleagues prior to the recent decision concerning Sudanese student visas.

Josh MacAlister (Labour) (Whitehaven and Workington): The new International Education Strategy has confirmed this government's continued commitment to welcome international students who meet the requirements to study in the UK.

The government recognises the significant economic and cultural contribution that all international students make to the UK's higher education sector.

We must, however, retain a robust immigration system which safeguards against exploitation. The government is therefore introducing targeted measures to help protect the integrity of the system, which may apply to study visas. These measures will apply where evidence shows a consistently high number and proportion of visa-linked asylum claims. Once in place, applications from the specified nationalities on the affected routes will be refused.

The government announced on 4 March that these measures would be imposed on nationals of four countries, including Sudan. This means that Sudanese nationals will not be awarded a study visa until the measures are lifted.

Grouped Questions: 119437

[Source](#)

Department for Education: Higher Education: Artificial Intelligence

Nadia Whittome (Labour) (Nottingham East): (120481) To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of generative AI on academic standards in higher education.

Josh MacAlister (Labour) (Whitehaven and Workington): Universities are independent, autonomous bodies responsible for designing and implementing their own artificial Intelligence (AI) policies. They are already responding to the opportunities and challenges AI presents.

The Office for Students (OfS) set out its approach to the use of AI in higher education (HE) in June 2025. The approach can be found here: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/news-blog-and-events/blog/embracing-innovation-in-higher-education-our-approach-to-artificial-intelligence/>.

Providers are responsible for detecting and preventing academic misconduct, including misuse of AI, in line with the OfS' regulatory framework. Providers that fall below these standards could be subject to regulatory action.

The government is committed to ensuring that AI is not used to undermine high academic standards in HE. As set out in the Post-16 education and skills white paper, the department will support the OfS to assess the impact of artificial intelligence, including how students are using it in assessments, to ensure the integrity of HE assessments and qualifications is not compromised.

Source

Department for Education: Students: Loans

Olivia Blake (Labour) (Sheffield Hallam): (120050) To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to make an assessment of the potential impact of student loan repayments on those with multiple plans and postgraduate loans.

Josh MacAlister (Labour) (Whitehaven and Workington): Unlike commercial loans, student loans carry significant protections for borrowers. Student loan repayments are linked to income, not to the amount borrowed or interest applied. Repayments are made at a constant rate of 9% above the earnings threshold for undergraduate loans (borrowers with multiple undergraduate loans have their contributions apportioned to the relevant loans), and 6% above the earnings threshold for postgraduate loans.

Postgraduate loans are made concurrently with any outstanding undergraduate loan. If a borrower's income drops below the repayment threshold, or they are not earning, their repayments will stop.

Any outstanding loan including interest built up, is cancelled at the end of the loan term with no detriment to the borrower, and debt is never passed on to family members or descendants.

The government appreciates that making student loan repayments does have an impact on individuals. This is why there are unique protections for borrowers, and the finance system is heavily subsidised by taxpayers.

Source

Department for Education: Higher Education: Radicalism

James McMurdock (Independent) (South Basildon and East Thurrock): (120564) To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to her Department's press

release entitled Students given stronger protections against extremism on campus, published on 8 March 2026, whether the updated guidance includes safeguards to protect free speech.

Josh MacAlister (Labour) (Whitehaven and Workington): The updated guidance will include safeguards to protect freedom of speech within the law and will clearly signpost higher education providers to the Office for Students' guidance related to freedom of speech

here: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/regulatory-advice-24-guidance-related-to-freedom-of-speech/>. Further guidance will be issued in the Spring on Managing External Speakers and Events to ensure providers can meet their Prevent duty obligations while upholding freedom of speech.

Source

Department for Education: Universities: Admissions

Mike Wood (Conservative) (Kingswinford and South Staffordshire): (119910) To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the answer of 3 November 2025, to Question 84664, on Universities: Admissions, if she will publish the terms of reference of the task and finish group into higher education admissions; and what the definition is of disadvantaged backgrounds.

Josh MacAlister (Labour) (Whitehaven and Workington): The Terms of Reference of the Access and Participation Task and Finish Group were published on GOV.UK in February 2026:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6985f6bf85bc7d6ba0fbc74f/HE_Access_and_Participation_Task_and_Finish_Group_-_Terms_of_Reference.pdf.

The Task and Finish Group's remit is to consider regional disparities and how to tackle the most systemic barriers across the journey into higher education for disadvantaged students.

The department has not issued direct guidance to the group on the definition of disadvantage for admission purposes.

Source

Department for Education: Students: Loans

Alex Brewer (Liberal Democrats) (North East Hampshire): (120504) To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of the Plan 2 student loan system on graduates whose repayments do not cover the interest added to their balance.

Josh MacAlister (Labour) (Whitehaven and Workington): Plan 2 student loans were designed and implemented by previous governments and students in England starting degrees under this government have different arrangements.

Plan 2 loans interest rates are applied at the Retail Price Index (RPI) only, then variable up to RPI +3% depending on earnings. Interest rates do not impact monthly repayments made by student loan borrowers, which stay at a constant rate of 9% above an earnings threshold to protect lower earners.

Any outstanding loan and interest written off at the end of the loan term, and debt is never passed on to family members or descendants.

[Source](#)

Department for Education: Students: Loans

Jess Brown-Fuller (Liberal Democrats) (Chichester): (120592) To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of assessing the income of a parent's cohabiting partner who is not (a) a legal parent and (b) step-parent when determining eligibility for student maintenance loans on access to higher education.

Josh MacAlister (Labour) (Whitehaven and Workington): For most full-time undergraduate students under the age of 25, the Student Loans Company (SLC) assess the income of students' parents and, where applicable, parental partners to determine household income. This ensures that the highest levels of support are targeted at students from the lowest income families.

Entitlement to maintenance loans based on the income of students' parents or, where their parents have separated, the income of the more appropriate parent (usually the parent with whom the student normally lives) and, where applicable, that of the parent's partner.

The household income assessment allows the SLC to process around 1.4 million applications for student support each year in time for the start of the relevant academic year.

Source

Department for Education: Higher Education: Radicalism

James McMurdock (Independent) (South Basildon and East Thurrock): (120568) To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to her Department's press release entitled Students given stronger protections against extremism on campus, published on 8 March 2026, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the Prevent duty in higher education institutions.

Josh MacAlister (Labour) (Whitehaven and Workington): Higher education (HE) providers are subject to the Prevent duty to have “due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.” To comply with the Prevent duty, providers must demonstrate they have effective policies and procedures in place to safeguard individuals susceptible to radicalisation. This includes assessing the risk of learners becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. Under the Prevent duty, the Office for Students (OfS) monitors and evaluates whether universities and other HE providers have due regard to the need to prevent people being drawn into terrorism. The OfS has assessed that HE providers are broadly compliant with their Prevent duty requirements. The latest assessment of Prevent monitoring in HE is available here: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/prevent-monitoring-summary-of-2023-24-accountability-and-data-returns/>.

Source

Department for Education: Higher Education: Radicalism

James McMurdock (Independent) (South Basildon and East Thurrock): (120569) To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to her Department's press release entitled Students given stronger protections against extremism on campus, published on 8 March 2026, what protections will be available for university staff who report concerns relating to extremism and intimidation on campus.

Josh MacAlister (Labour) (Whitehaven and Workington): Universities are autonomous institutions and therefore have their own policies and procedures for handling employee concerns.

In addition, the government will work with the Department for Business and Trade to add the Office for Students (OfS) to the list of prescribed bodies under the Public Interest Disclosure (Prescribed Persons) Order 2024. This change will help ensure that whistleblowers can report wrongdoing related to registered higher education providers with confidence.

The OfS will also strengthen how it monitors universities' efforts to prevent individuals from becoming involved in terrorism or supporting it. It will publish a new monitoring framework and accompanying guidance in September, which will come into effect at the beginning of 2027.

Source

Department for Education: Higher Education: Radicalism

James McMurdock (Independent) (South Basildon and East Thurrock): (120562) To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to her Department's press release entitled Students given stronger protections against extremism on campus, published on 8 March 2026, how many university students have been referred under the Prevent duty in each year since 2020.

Josh MacAlister (Labour) (Whitehaven and Workington): The Home Office publishes overall Prevent referrals by sector but does not break down the 'Education' category between schools, colleges, and universities. However, the Office for Students publishes annual Prevent monitoring data for higher education providers here: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/prevent-monitoring-summary-of-2023-24-accountability-and-data-returns/>.

This includes formal external Prevent referrals. The most recent reporting period 2023/2024 indicates that universities made 65 Prevent referrals, but it does not indicate how many of the individuals involved were students versus staff.

Source

Department for Education: School Leaving: Apprenticeships

Jim Dickson (Labour) (Dartford): (121154) To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many and what proportion of school leavers progressed onto apprenticeships at (a) Level 3, (b) Level 4 and (c) above by type of establishment in each year since September 2020.

Josh MacAlister (Labour) (Whitehaven and Workington): The department publishes information on the destinations of students after key stage 4 and 16 to 18 study. This includes whether an apprenticeship was sustained.

To be counted, young people need to sustain the apprenticeship for six months in the academic year after leaving.

Data on the destinations of students who have completed key stage 4 study is available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/059bdddb-673e-47bd-f7ed-08de834d471d>.

Data on the destinations of students who have completed 16 to 18 study is available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/7cebeac7-c6b9-475a-f7ef-08de834d471d>.

Source

Department for Education: Higher Education: Radicalism

James McMurdock (Independent) (South Basildon and East Thurrock): (120563) To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to her Department's press release entitled Students given stronger protections against extremism on campus, published on 8 March 2026, whether any additional resources will be allocated to the Office for Students to help monitor universities.

Josh MacAlister (Labour) (Whitehaven and Workington): The Office for Students will strengthen its monitoring activity by reprioritising its existing resources.

Source

Department for Education: Students: Loans

Ruth Cadbury (Labour) (Brentford and Isleworth): (119913) To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the financial impact of maternity leave on the (a) amount of additional debt accrued on and (b) length of time to repay the debt for student finance loans.

Josh MacAlister (Labour) (Whitehaven and Workington): The department and the Student Loan Company do not hold information on the amount of additional money accrued by women while on maternity leave.

Student loan repayments are linked to income, not to the amount borrowed or interest applied. Repayments are made at a constant rate of 9% above the earnings threshold. Borrowers earning under the repayment threshold, including while on statutory maternity leave, are not required to make repayments, however, interest will continue to accrue. When borrowers are on maternity leave, and earnings are below the earnings threshold, interest, across both plan 2 and plan 5, is applied at the Retail Price Index only.

Any outstanding loan, including interest built up, is cancelled at the end of the loan term with no detriment to the borrower, and debt is never passed on to family members or descendants.

The department will release an equalities impact assessment, including the impact on lifetime repayments, alongside other borrower impacts for the plan 2 repayment threshold and interest threshold freeze announced at the 2025 Budget.

Grouped Questions: 119912

[Source](#)

Department for Education: Higher Education: Finance

Rachael Maskell (Labour) (York Central): (121333) To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department has undertaken a review of the tuition fee-based funding model for higher education.

Josh MacAlister (Labour) (Whitehaven and Workington): The government set out its plans for tuition fees as part of the Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper, published on 20 October 2025.

To provide long-term certainty over future funding for the sector so that it can focus on reform, we will increase tuition fee caps for all higher education (HE) providers in line with forecast inflation in 2026/27 and 2027/28 and then legislate when parliamentary time allows to increase tuition fee caps automatically for future academic years.

Maximum fee limits for undergraduate courses in the 2026/27 and 2027/28 academic years will increase by forecast inflation of 2.71% (to £9,790) and 2.68% (to £10,050) respectively, based on the retail price index (exclusive of mortgage interest payments).

In future years, we will link inflationary fee uplifts to judgements on HE providers' quality and restrict fee income where high quality cannot be demonstrated.

Source

Department for Education: Students: Loans

Ian Byrne (Labour) (Liverpool West Derby): (120931) To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of interest rates applied to income-contingent student loans on the total level of graduate debt.

Josh MacAlister (Labour) (Whitehaven and Workington): The department does not hold analysis on the impact of interest rates on total level of graduate debt.

No Plan 5 borrower should see their loan balance grow in real terms without additional outlay, as the rate of interest for Plan 5 loans is applied at Retail Price Index (RPI) only.

Plan 2 loan interest rates are applied at RPI only, then variable up to RPI+3% depending on earnings. Interest rates do not impact monthly repayments made by student loan borrowers, which stay at a constant rate of 9% above an earnings threshold to protect lower earners.

Outstanding debt, including interest accrued, is cancelled at the end of the loan term with no detriment to the borrower, and debt is never passed on to family members or descendants. There are no commercial loans that offer this level of borrower protection. This is a deliberate government investment in students and the economy.

Source

Department for Education: Students: Loans

Ian Byrne (Labour) (Liverpool West Derby): (120933) To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the potential impact of increased student loan balances on graduates' access to mortgages and savings.

Josh MacAlister (Labour) (Whitehaven and Workington): The size of one's outstanding student loan is not a barrier to accessing a mortgage and savings. Student loan balances do not appear on borrower credit records, meaning the total size of the student loan debt is not considered in a borrower mortgage application. Monthly student loan repayments will be considered alongside other living costs as part of the affordability check for mortgage applications in the same way as any other fixed monthly outgoings, but monthly repayments are not linked to the size of the outstanding loan.

Student loan repayments are linked to income, not to the amount borrowed or interest applied. Repayments are made at a constant rate of 9% above the earnings threshold. Borrowers earning under the earnings threshold, are not required to make repayments. Any outstanding loan including interest built up, is cancelled at the end of the loan term with no detriment to the borrower, and debt is never passed on to family members or descendants.

The government appreciates that making student loan repayments has an impact on individuals, and this is why there are unique protections for borrowers and the finance system is heavily subsidised by taxpayers.

Source

Department for Education: Students: Loans

Ian Byrne (Labour) (Liverpool West Derby): (120932) To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of freezing the income repayment threshold for Plan 2 student loans on the level of disposable income of graduates earning between £29,000 and £40,000 per year.

Josh MacAlister (Labour) (Whitehaven and Workington): Plan 2 student loans were designed and implemented by previous governments, and students in England starting degrees under this government have different arrangements. Threshold freezes have been introduced to protect taxpayers and students now, alongside future generations of learners and workers.

Student loan repayments are linked to income, not to the amount borrowed or interest applied. As repayments remain income-contingent if a borrower's salary remains the same, their monthly repayments will also stay the same.

Repayments are made at a constant rate of 9% above the earnings threshold. Borrowers earning under the earnings threshold, are not required to make repayments. Any outstanding loan including interest built up, is cancelled at the end of the loan term with no detriment to the borrower, and debt is never passed on to family members or descendants.

The government appreciates that making student loan repayments has an impact on individuals, and this is why there are unique protections for borrowers and the finance system is heavily subsidised by taxpayers.

Source

Department for Education: Higher Education: Finance

Rachael Maskell (Labour) (York Central): (121351) To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will review the financial situation of Higher Education institutions.

Josh MacAlister (Labour) (Whitehaven and Workington): Higher education (HE) providers are independent from government and as such are responsible for managing their finances and ensuring their business models provide long-term sustainability.

However, this government is committed to helping put the HE sector on a secure financial footing so that it can face the challenges of the next decade. Our decision to raise tuition fees annually in line with inflation, alongside refocusing the Office for Students (OfS) on monitoring the sector's financial health, demonstrates this commitment.

Although the OfS is responsible for monitoring the sector's financial sustainability, the government has a strong interest in understanding the sector's level of risk. My department continues to engage closely with the OfS, other government departments and sector representative groups, as well as individual providers, to better understand the changing financial landscape.

Grouped Questions: 121350

Source

Department for Education: Higher Education: Radicalism

James McMurdock (Independent) (South Basildon and East Thurrock): (120573) To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to her Department's press release entitled Students given stronger protections against extremism on campus, published on 8 March 2026, when she plans to review the effectiveness of the increased campus extremism protections.

Josh MacAlister (Labour) (Whitehaven and Workington): The department has assessed that Prevent related concerns, harassment and intimidation on university campuses in England have increased in recent years, reflecting wider societal and geopolitical tensions.

Prevent related concerns in higher education reached a record high in the 2023/24 reporting year of 65 Prevent referrals according to the Office for Students annual reporting data here: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/prevent-monitoring-summary-of-2023-24-accountability-and-data-returns/>. Reports also highlight a significant rise in harassment and intimidation, particularly following the Hamas attacks of 7 October 2023.

There is no place for unlawful extremist behaviour on university campuses, including harassment or intimidation, and we expect Vice Chancellors to tackle it decisively. The department will continue to work closely with key sector organisations to understand how their data and reported campus experiences evolve over time.

Grouped Questions: 120567, 120572

[Source](#)

Department for Education: Overseas Students: Loans

Gregory Campbell (Democratic Unionist Party) (East Londonderry): (121702) To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what checks have been carried out in the last twelve months on student loans awarded to people enrolling at UK Universities whose country of origin was Romania.

Josh MacAlister (Labour) (Whitehaven and Workington): Education is a devolved matter, and the response outlines the information for England only.

To qualify for support, applicants must provide the Student Loans Company (SLC) with evidence of their eligibility. This includes evidence of their identity, immigration status and ordinary residence.

SLC have robust procedures in place to check student finance eligibility, including data-sharing with the Home Office and HM Passport Office. When required, the SLC will contact the Home Office to confirm an applicant's immigration status and ordinary residence.

SLC makes payments of loans to students on courses at higher education providers (HEPs) and HEPs in England must be registered with the Office for Students (OfS) before students are eligible to access funding. SLC monitors applications for student finance and works with the department and the OfS to protect public money.

Source

Department for Education: Further Education

Saqib Bhatti (Conservative) (Meriden and Solihull East): (120534) To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what evidence supports the proposal to restrict all V Level qualifications to 360 guided learning hours: and what assessment has been made of the potential impact of this restriction on progression to higher education and skilled employment in sectors where greater breadth or depth of study is required.

Josh MacAlister (Labour) (Whitehaven and Workington): V Levels are designed to be 360 guided learning hours to enable them to be taken alongside A Levels or other V Levels to form broad study programmes, enabling breadth of study for young people who want to keep their options open. For young people who know what broad career path they want to follow, and want to study a single large qualification focused on that area, T Levels provide a great option for progression. In specific and limited cases, we will allow a partnered set of V Levels, which will enable overall depth of study in a linked area.

The department will support providers to transition to V Levels and new Level 2 pathways through comprehensive guidance, exemplar materials, working with awarding organisations on providing teaching resources, and the establishment of a sector-led qualification pioneers group to test, refine, and inform effective implementation.

The department has undertaken an equality impact assessment for the government consultation response and does not anticipate any negative impacts of introducing the new pathways on any groups with protected characteristics. We will carefully

consider the impacts on different groups of young people as we design new qualifications.

We are working closely with higher education institutions and UCAS to ensure wide recognition of V Levels, tariff points parity with other qualifications and to clearly communicate progression pathways ahead of first teaching.

Further information on the rollout of 16 to 19 qualifications reform is set out in the government response and the equalities impact assessment, published here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/post-16-level-3-and-below-pathways>.

Grouped Questions: 120531, 120532, 120533

Source

Department for Education: Overseas Students: Student Wastage

Chris Philp (Conservative) (Croydon South): (121389) To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what number of international students by university and by nationality who dropped out of university in the academic year 2024/2025.

Josh MacAlister (Labour) (Whitehaven and Workington): The Office for Students (OfS) publishes statistics across different aspects of the student lifecycle by higher education providers to help inform regulatory processes. The Student Outcomes Data Dashboard is accessible here: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/student-outcomes-data-dashboard/data-dashboard/>. The dashboard holds the following indicators:

- Continuation: the percentage of first degree entrants who continue their studies after 12 months for full-time students, or 24 months for part-time students.
- Completion: the percentage of first degree entrants who completed their course within 4 years 15 days for full-time students, and within 6 years 15 days for part-time students.

The OfS publish breakdowns for non-UK domiciled students for English OfS registered providers. The latest data available are for 2022/23 entrants for continuation rates and 2019/20 entrants for completion rates. The student outcomes dashboard is

updated annually and was last released in August 2025. The data can be accessed here:

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/student-outcomes-data-dashboard/get-the-data/>.

Data on student nationality as opposed to domicile, which is the permanent address of the student immediately prior to study, is not published by the OfS and is not readily available.

Source

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office: Chevening Scholarships Programme

Afzal Khan (Labour) (Manchester Rusholme): (120004) To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if she will provide a breakdown of the number people in the UK on Chevening scholarships in each of the last ten years by nationality.

Chris Elmore (Labour) (Bridgend): I thank the Hon Member for his question. I will deposit in the library the full requested breakdown of Chevening scholarships by year and by country, but as a summary of the top-line findings, the table below sets out the top 20 countries for scholarships over the period 2015-25.

?

Brazil	611
Indonesia	598
Mexico	574
Pakistan	565
India	523
Nigeria	489
Egypt	486

South Africa 447

Malaysia 429

Kenya 347

Syria 290

Argentina 283

Philippines 282

Vietnam 255

Thailand 241

Turkey 236

Ukraine 226

Ghana 210

Bangladesh 179

Mongolia 142

Source

Home Office: Asylum: Overseas Students

Anneliese Dodds (Labour) (Oxford East): (120634) To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department operates a policy of ending study visas for nationalities where asylum claims from students go beyond a certain percentage.

Mike Tapp (Labour) (Dover and Deal): From 26 March 2026, we will refuse sponsored study visa applications from main applicants outside of the UK who are nationals of Afghanistan, Cameroon, Myanmar, and Sudan. Additionally, we will refuse Skilled Worker visa applications from main applicants outside of the UK who are nationals of Afghanistan.

Almost 8,000 students from Afghanistan, Myanmar, Sudan and Cameroon have claimed asylum since 2021. This is over 470% of their 2021 level. Without action, asylum claims will start to outstrip visas issued – and in the case of Afghan workers has already done so.

Due to the impact of asylum claims on border operations and the wider immigration system, these high numbers are not sustainable.

The UK keeps its visa system under regular review and decisions on changes are informed by a range of factors.

Source

Home Office: Refugees: Visas

The Lord German OBE (Liberal Democrats): (HL15382) To ask His Majesty's Government how refugees on the core protection route will be supported to transition on to work and study visas.

The Rt Hon. the Lord Hanson of Flint (Labour): The family reunion route was suspended to ease the pressures that local authorities and public services have been placed under due to the recent significant increase in people arriving under this route in recent years.

Outstanding applications will continue to be considered under the family reunion rules in place prior to the commencement of the suspension, including those that are at appeal.

During the suspension, the Government is taking forward wider asylum and family reforms to place the system on a fairer, controlled and sustainable footing. Further information on forthcoming changes will be set out in due course. In the meantime, other family routes remain available, including Appendix FM.

Those who claimed asylum or made further submissions before 2 March 2026, and who are eligible for protection, will receive 5 years' permission to stay in accordance with the transitional arrangements included in the Immigration Rules laid on 5 March 2026.

We will encourage refugees to switch out of the Core Protection route wherever possible into a new, bespoke work and study route to access family reunion and settlement rights with new fees and conditions in accordance with the rules of that route.

Refugees granted refugee status or humanitarian protection (as well as those arriving under one of the UK's resettlement schemes) have immediate access to the labour market and benefits, including employment support from Department for Work and Pensions work coaches. Unemployed refugees are eligible for full funding for English for Speakers of Other Languages learning.

Grouped Questions: HL15383, HL15385

Source

Department for Work and Pensions: Social Security Benefits: Higher Education

Shivani Raja (Conservative) (Leicester East): (121483) To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, pursuant to Question 112415, what evaluation he has conducted of the link between students leaving higher education without completing their studies and subsequent reliance on out-of-work benefits among 16-24-year-olds.

Andrew Western (Labour) (Stretford and Urmston): No specific assessment has been made, or evaluation conducted, of the link between leaving higher education without completing and welfare benefits but we know qualifications matter. Data from the 2021 census showed, 1 in 5 young people aged 16-24 in full-time education or employment had no qualifications or qualifications below Level 2. Among those who were unemployed or economically inactive, the proportion with no qualifications or qualifications below level 2 was twice as high.

This government will not leave an entire generation of young people behind. When this Government came into power there were 921,000 young people not in education, employment and training (NEET), an increase of 250,000 since 2021. For many years our young people have not had the opportunity and support they deserve.

That is why this Government is investing in young people's futures. On 16 March we announced a further £1 billion investment in young people, taking the total investment to £2.5 billion over the next three years through the Youth Guarantee and additional investment in the Growth and Skills Levy. This investment will support almost one million young people and create up to 500,000 opportunities to earn and learn.

The Government will also prioritise prevention, building on measures announced in the Skills White Paper. The Government will improve support in schools, monitor

attendance, increase access to work experience and work with local authorities to pilot auto-enrolling young people in further education, if needed.

Grouped Questions: 121482

Source

Home Office: Overseas Students: Afghanistan

Catherine West (Labour) (Hornsey and Friern Barnet): (122157) To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of restricting student visa access for women and girls from Afghanistan on the ability of those people to access education.

Mike Tapp (Labour) (Dover and Deal): The UK has a proud tradition of supporting education, equality, and human rights, and we remain dedicated to helping the people of Afghanistan. Our current £151 million aid program (equivalent to 13.3 billion Afghanis) provides vital life-saving support to the country's most vulnerable people, especially women and girls. We are committed that at least 50% of those reached by UK aid in Afghanistan are women and girls.

As set out in the Restoring Order and Control policy statement, the Government remains committed to the introduction of capped safe and legal routes for refugees and displaced people to come to the United Kingdom. These new safe and legal routes will start this autumn with a student refugee route, with the first arrivals in Autumn 2027. Dedicated humanitarian routes are the appropriate way to combine compassion and control with securing our border.

In the past 3 years more Afghan students claimed asylum than we issued new student visas in each year. This does not achieve the appropriate balance between compassion, control and a secure border.

Source

Home Office: Refugees

Anneliese Dodds (Labour) (Oxford East): (122295) To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, when the new refugee study and work pathway schemes will open.

Mike Tapp (Labour) (Dover and Deal): In the Restoring Order and Control statement, the Government committed to the creation of safe and legal routes. This included

capped routes for refugees and displaced students to come to the UK to study or for work.

On 5 March the Home Secretary set out in a speech that starting this Autumn we will be opening a new student refugee route, with the first arrivals in Autumn 2027.

Policy development and delivery planning are ongoing. Further details, including on timelines for the work route, will be set out in due course.

[Source](#)

Home Office: Refugees: Resettlement

Anneliese Dodds (Labour) (Oxford East): (121887) To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if the new refugee study and work pathway schemes will be open to nationals from Sudan and Afghanistan.

Mike Tapp (Labour) (Dover and Deal): In the Restoring Order and Control policy statement, the Government committed to transforming its approach to safe and legal routes. This included the creation of a named sponsorship scheme and capped routes for refugee and displaced students to come to the UK to study or for work.

Eligibility requirements for the route, including who will be eligible, have yet to be set. Further details, including eligibility requirements, will be set out in due course.

[Source](#)

Department for Education: Higher Education: Radicalism

James McMurdock (Independent) (South Basildon and East Thurrock): (120571) To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to her Department's press release entitled Students given stronger protections against extremism on campus, published on 8 March 2026, whether universities will be required to adopt the Campus Cohesion Charter as a condition of registration with the Office for Students.

Josh MacAlister (Labour) (Whitehaven and Workington): The Campus Cohesion Charter will not preclude or discourage any lawful speech or behaviour and the department will work closely with the Office for Students to ensure that is the case. Universities will be strongly encouraged but not compelled to adopt the charter.

It will be a student-led product, facilitated by a partnership of the department, the National Union of Students and University of Salford. Other groups and experts will be invited to collaborate as the product evolves.

Grouped Questions: 120565, 120566, 120570

[Source](#)

Department for Education: Higher Education: Islamophobia

Claire Coutinho (Conservative) (East Surrey): (121478) To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the compatibility of the Government's definition of anti-Muslim hostility with the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023.

Josh MacAlister (Labour) (Whitehaven and Workington): As with the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's working definition of antisemitism, which the government adopted in 2016, a clear definition of anti-Muslim hostility is an important step towards combatting the unacceptable hostility that Muslims face.

Where higher education providers adopt this definition, they must do so in a way that is compatible with their duties to protect freedom of speech and academic freedom.

[Source](#)

Home Office: Visas: Overseas Students

The Baroness Lister of Burtersett CBE (Labour): (HL15537) To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have conducted a formal Equality Impact Assessment regarding the implementation of the emergency brake on student visas for nationals of Myanmar, Sudan, Cameroon, and Afghanistan; and if so, whether they will publish the findings of that assessment.

The Rt Hon. the Lord Hanson of Flint (Labour): As set out in the Restoring Order and Control policy statement, the Government remains committed to the introduction of capped safe and legal routes for refugees and displaced people to come to the United Kingdom. Work is underway to develop these routes, including confirming the eligibility criteria and the number of places to be made available for each new safe and legal route.

It is essential that any safe and legal routes are sustainable, well managed, and aligned with the United Kingdom's capacity to welcome, accommodate and integrate refugees. Work is underway to operationalise these new routes and further details will be provided in due course.

Equality Impact Assessments have been completed in line with the Equality Act 2010 for the emergency brakes on Afghanistan, Cameroon, Myanmar and Sudan.

Grouped Questions: HL15539

Source

Department for Education: Erasmus+ Programme

The Rt Hon. the Lord Redwood (Conservative): (HL15402) To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the 2027–28 cost of participating in the Erasmus+ programme.

The Rt Hon. the Baroness Smith of Malvern (Labour): The government have now concluded negotiations with the European Commission on the UK's association to Erasmus+ in 2027. This commitment covers the 2027/28 academic year. Any participation in Erasmus+ into the next Multiannual Financial Framework will need to be agreed in the future and be based on a fair and balanced contribution.

We have secured significantly improved financial terms compared to default arrangements, ensuring a fairer balance between the UK's contribution to the EU and the number of UK participants who receive funding. We negotiated a 30% discount, securing participation for 2027 at a cost of approximately £570 million, saving UK taxpayers around £240 million while securing the benefits of participation for young people in the UK and across the EU.

The UK will receive most of that money back to distribute amongst UK beneficiaries. UK participants will also have the opportunity to compete for grants from a c.£1 billion central pot directly managed by the European Commission.

The department will report to Parliament the costs arising from our participation, including costs related to the implementation of the programme, in its annual accounts.

Source



Sector news

English Social Mobility Index Results – HEPI

The latest results for the English Social Mobility Index, which is compiled by London South Bank University (LSBU) and published by the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI), shows the University of Bradford, Aston University and the University of Wolverhampton in the top three places.

The annual LSBU English Social Mobility Index is published each year by the Higher Education Policy Institute and measures the social mobility of graduates.

The newly published results, which cover last year (2025), show the number of socio-economically disadvantaged graduates and the social distance they travel for each registered higher education institution in England.

The Index combines access, continuation and outcomes measures for undergraduates for all modes of study (except apprenticeships due to limitations in the available data).

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

UCEA and UUK send a joint letter to Helen Hayes MP, Chair of the Westminster Education Committee

Universities UK and the Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA) wrote to the Education Committee to urge it to recommend that government amend regulations requiring some higher education institutions to offer the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS), so that affected providers can instead offer alternative pension arrangements.

The letter argues that mandatory participation in TPS has become a major financial pressure, particularly for post-92 institutions and conservatoires, and says rising employer contribution rates have contributed to redundancies, course closures and other cost-saving measures. It also warns that some institutions have responded by creating subsidiary companies to appoint new staff outside TPS, which UUK and UCEA say is fragmenting the workforce and creating industrial relations challenges.

While welcoming the government's recent decision to increase home undergraduate tuition fees in line with inflation and provide additional research funding, other policy decisions, including changes affecting international student recruitment, an international student levy and higher National Insurance contributions, will significantly reduce funding across the sector. Greater flexibility over pension provision would help ease financial pressures and reduce the risk of institutional failure.

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

Franchise arrangements for higher education providers – DfE guidance

the Department for Education (DfE) published guidance confirming that, from academic year 2028/29, higher education providers in England delivering franchised courses will need to register with the Office for Students (OfS), England's higher education regulator, if they have 300 or more franchised students. This will become a condition for continued access to public student finance for new students.

The guidance applies to provision at level 4 and above, including postgraduate study, but does not apply to apprenticeships or to students studying modules or credits only. The government says the change is intended to strengthen oversight of franchised provision and protect public money, quality and student outcomes.

In practice, this means unregistered franchised providers above the threshold will need to register directly with the OfS if their courses are to remain designated for student finance. The 300-student threshold is based on the total headcount of franchised students across all partnerships and includes full-time, part-time, online, domestic, international, publicly funded and self-funded students on level 4+ courses. Non-subcontracted students, apprentices, and those taking modules or credits only are excluded.

A few further points are worth noting:

- Existing students are protected. Students who started their course before academic year 2028/29 will remain eligible for student finance until they complete that course.
- The Department for Education does not plan to apply a formal "margin of error" below the 300-student threshold, though appeals will be considered on a case-by-case basis, including during the first two years of implementation.

- Where an unregistered provider goes over the threshold, a “correction year” may apply. In those cases, courses delivered by that provider can lose student finance designation for new students in the following academic year, affecting both the delivery provider and any lead provider relying on that arrangement.

The guidance also sets out a list of exempt bodies, including further education corporations, sixth form college corporations, National Health Service bodies, local authorities and government departments, when acting directly as franchise delivery partners. However, joint ventures are generally still in scope and may need to register separately if they exceed the threshold.

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

Investment in research infrastructure - House of Commons Public Accounts Committee

The House of Commons Public Accounts Committee [has announced an inquiry into government and UKRI investment in research infrastructure](#), following the National Audit Office’s report on the same topic.

You can submit evidence until Thursday 14 May 2026.

The long shadow - How childhood disadvantage depresses the earnings of university graduates in England – Resolute Foundation report

This briefing note examines how being in deep poverty in childhood – proxied by eligibility to free school meals at age 16 – continues to shape graduates’ earnings long after university. Using the Longitudinal Education Outcomes dataset to track the education and work pathways of 520,000 graduates in England born between 1986 and 1989, it shows that graduates who experienced deep poverty in childhood still face a significant earnings gap after a decade in work post graduation.

Key findings

- Graduates who experienced deep poverty in childhood earn around 13 per cent less than their better-off peers a decade after graduation.

- Part of this gap reflects differences in the universities attended, subjects studied, degree outcomes achieved and the employers that graduates who were and were not in deep poverty in childhood work for.
- But even comparing graduates who finished university with the same degree and 10 years later work for the same employer, a pay penalty of 5 per cent remains.
- Graduates who were disadvantaged in childhood climb the job ladder, moving from lower-paying to more similarly-paying employers to their better-off peers, and this helps narrow the gap slightly over their first decade in the labour market.

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

Healthier Communities 2030 – Russel Group

The Russell Group has published a new “Healthier Communities 2030” commitment, setting out how its 24 universities say they will work with the National Health Service (NHS), national and local government, industry and communities to support a healthier and more resilient UK by 2030.

The commitment is framed around growing workforce capacity, strengthening research and innovation, and deepening local partnerships. The Russell Group says that, by 2030, its universities will train 181,000 UK graduates with skills relevant to health and care, including doctors, dentists, nurses, midwives and other professionals, which it says would represent an additional 26,000 graduates. It also says it wants to help life sciences spinouts secure around £5 billion in external investment in 2030, while working more closely with communities and public services to tackle health inequalities, improve access to care and support local growth.

The publication also sets out three main areas of focus:

- strengthening the talent pipeline for health and care, including more flexible and inclusive training routes and digital and artificial intelligence skills;
- applying research to prevention, earlier intervention and local health challenges, including inequalities linked to poverty, housing and homelessness;
- driving innovation, investment and regional growth through healthcare and life sciences spinouts, start-ups and social enterprises.

The Russell Group says it will support this work through a new nationwide programme of local engagement events with stakeholders across health and care, and by working with the four UK governments on long-term funding, workforce planning, and research and innovation policy.

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

OfS publishes new research on how prepared students feel for life after university or college

Independent research commissioned by the Office for Students (OfS) suggests that most students feel confident about achieving their goals after graduation but would value strengthened access to support to help them manage the transition to life after study.

Conducted by IFF Research, the research examines the extent to which graduates feel prepared for life after their studies, and their views on the barriers and support that shaped their transitions. It comprised focus groups and a nationally representative poll of over 1,600 graduates from undergraduate and postgraduate courses at OfS-registered institutions.

The polling found that the majority (62 per cent) of graduates felt confident about achieving their goals after graduation, and half (50 per cent) felt prepared for life after leaving university or college. Other findings include:

- 88 per cent of respondents said that their university or college had helped to prepare them, with a third (33 per cent) using their institution's career service for support.
- Graduates who had completed higher education studies in further education colleges were more likely to feel prepared (69 per cent) than graduates from courses at universities (50 per cent).
- Family and friends were the most useful source of support for most graduates (69 per cent), ranking higher than any kind of institutional support. Graduates who do not have a parent with a higher education qualification were less likely to find this kind of support useful (65 per cent compared to 74 per cent), highlighting the importance of institutions providing support for careers (and other next steps) to students whose families may not be able to.

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

Advance HE - 2025 Student Equality Data Dashboards

<https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/news-and-views/2025-student-equality-data-dashboards>

New HEPI Policy Note calls for sustained and intensive outreach to tackle persistent higher education access gaps.

Scaling Opportunity (HEPI Policy Note 70), by Charlotte Gleed and Charlotte Armstrong, examines the structural inequalities that shape progression to higher education and asks higher education institutions to think about 'what works, for whom, in what context, and why' when conducting outreach. Drawing on analysis from the Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT), Uni Connect and other sector evidence, the report makes the case for moving from late-stage adjustments to long-term, preventative engagement.

Despite decades of widening participation work, significant attainment and progression gaps remain. The Policy Note argues that sustained and intensive outreach can shift these outcomes. Analysis from HEAT shows:

- Students who participate in an intensive outreach package are 29% more likely to enter higher education than matched peers who received minimal outreach.
- Participants in intensive outreach are 19% more likely to enter a high-tariff higher education institution.
- Among students eligible for Free School Meals, those who engage in intensive outreach are up to 38% more likely to progress to higher education than similar disadvantaged peers who receive minimal outreach.

The particularly strong impact for students eligible for Free School Meals underlines the potential of sustained engagement to narrow long-standing socio-economic gaps in progression. The authors argue that interventions must begin before Key Stage 4 attainment gaps are entrenched and before subject choices restrict future options.

Recommendations

The Policy Note calls for a shift from a 'cure' to a 'prevention' approach to access and participation and recommends:

- **Expanding and scaling sustained contact programmes** spanning pre- and post-16 outreach, beginning engagement between Years 7 and 9 at the latest and maintaining support through to sixth form.
- **Greater collaboration** between higher education providers, local authorities and national programmes to target cold spots and maximise value for money.
- **Recognition of access and participation as a national responsibility**, supported by stable, multi-year funding for collaborative schemes such as Uni Connect.
- **Stronger and more rigorous evaluation** of widening participation interventions to establish clearer causal links between outreach and progression outcomes.

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

Working group to advise OfS on development of statement of expectations around foreign interference

The Office for Students (OfS) will draw up a statement of expectations to ensure that arrangements between higher education institutions and foreign states meet freedom of speech and academic freedom requirements.

A working group will provide input as the OfS develops the statement of expectations, which will focus on the contracts and arrangements institutions have with foreign states and institutions in other countries. The working group will include affected students and their representatives, leaders of institutions, and academic staff with expertise in foreign interference. Bodies representing the higher education sector and interest groups with experience of these issues will also be invited.

The announcement follows a briefing for university leaders organised by ministers in February, as well as a series of roundtable events which have explored the scale of the problem, and the fundamental need to ensure academic freedom is upheld at universities and colleges.

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