



All-Party Parliamentary University Group

Weekly update

25 – 29 November 2024

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

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Parliamentary business

Skills for the future: apprenticeships and training – HoL Industry and Regulators Committee oral evidence

On Tuesday 26 November, the House of Lords Industry and Regulators Committee heard oral evidence as part of their *Skills for the future: apprenticeships and training* inquiry.

The Committee heard evidence from the following speakers:

- Rt Hon Baroness Smith of Malvern, Minister for Skills
- Alison McGovern MP, Minister for Employment
- Julia Kinniburgh, Director General, Skills Group at Department for Education (DfE)
- Tammy Fevrier, Deputy Director, Youth and Skills at Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

Chair of the Committee, Baroness Taylor of Bolton (Labour), asked for views on the Committee's concerns about the way in which the old apprenticeship system worked. Baroness Smith said the skills landscape was currently fragmented for both employers and providers, as well as being unclear for learners trying to find their route through the system and into work. The new Government had set up Skills England to bring coherence to the skills environment. She wanted to ensure there was a coherent link between local activities and a national framework. Work had started on a post-16 strategy, and this would provide more clarity about (i) the role of different providers, (ii) what qualifications learners needed to take up roles, and (iii) how to obtain qualifications.

Baroness Taylor wanted to know if commitments would be more long term and if this would lead to a reduction in the number of skills priorities being pursued. Baroness Smith said she hoped to provide longer term commitments. The role of Skills England would be closely linked to the Industrial Strategy which had identified eight key areas that needed to be supported with skills. These eight skills alongside construction, health and care and the green upgrade across all jobs would be the priorities for skills.

Viscount Trenchard (Conservative) asked if the post-16 strategy and the [Get Britain Working White Paper](#) would be closely linked to the Industrial Strategy. He also wanted more details about how the Industrial Strategy would be reflected in skills policy. Baroness Smith confirmed the strategies would be linked. The Chair of Skills England would sit on the [Industrial Strategy Council](#). The Industrial Strategy had asked

employers what more needed to be done to help them commit to training and skills. The Post-16 Education and Skills Strategy would be important for ensuring that these opportunities were available throughout people's lives. Get Britain Working also fitted with this.

Viscount Trenchard asked for more information on how DWP and DfE co-ordinated with each other to ensure the consistency of the skills system. Baroness Smith explained Skills England, DfE and DWP worked closely together. This was a mission led Government and she was invited to most of the Mission Boards because none of the missions would be successful without growing skills. There had been particularly close working on the development of the Youth Guarantee.

Viscount Thurso (Liberal Democrat) asked about the role of Skills England. Baroness Smith thought it was a testament to the importance placed by Government on Skills England that it had already completed an assessment of where the existing skills were based by engaging with employers as well as across Government. Skills England would be responsible for ensuring that the right technical qualifications were available to address the skills gap both now and in the future. It would act as a link between national and regional skills needs. Employers were having a more strategic say in what the gaps were through the development of Regional Growth Plans, the proposals in Get Britain Working and the input from Local skills improvement plan partnerships (LSIPs). Skills England was also helping to advise Government on what would make the skills system more effective such as reforming the apprenticeship levy. Skills England would create the coherence in the system.

Viscount Thurso asked how much funding Skills England would have control over. Baroness Smith explained Skills England was funded through multiple allocations such as funding for Further Education (FE), Adult Skills Funding and the Apprenticeship Levy. Skills England would be providing advice for these funding streams but would not be managing the funding directly. Viscount Thurso asked how Skills England would help with devolved decisions. Baroness Smith thought that a national approach for defining growth sectors and skills needs needed to be combined with devolution of funding. Skills England would help co-ordinate how local skills work and funding linked in with the national strategy.

Viscount Thurso asked what would happen to skills training that was not one of the Government missions. Baroness Smith said Skills England would not be exclusively focused on core skills highlighted in the missions.

Lord Best (Crossbench) asked what the replacement for the Local Employment and Skills Partnerships would be. Baroness Smith said there were 38 Local Skills Improvement Plans across England, and these were led by employer representative bodies. This enabled employers to provide a strategic view of skills and jobs at a local level. The Plans would include priorities from the Industrial Strategy as well as

elements specific to a local area. These fed into Local Growth Plans that mayoral authorities were responsible for.

Lord Clement-Jones (Liberal Democrat) asked what the intention around making the Apprenticeships Levy more flexible was. Baroness Smith said changes to the levy showed the Government listened to employers and recognised that more flexibilities could be delivered through the introduction of shorter duration and foundation apprenticeships. It would not be possible to fund every flexibility asked for and Skills England would provide advice on where the key flexibilities needed to be. These changes did not preclude the need to get employers to contribute more to training.

Baroness Taylor asked about timescales for all these proposals. Baroness Smith thought the new Government had already done quite a lot with the establishment of Skills England, proposed changes to the Apprenticeship Levy, announcements about the Youth Guarantee, the budget focus on FE, as well as setting up the [Curriculum and Assessment Review](#).

You can [read a transcript when it becomes available](#) and [watch the session](#).

IfATE (Transfer of Functions) Bill – HoL committee stage

On Tuesday 26 November, the second day of committee stage for the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (Transfer of Functions etc) Bill took place in the House of Lords. No amendments were agreed.

Topics covered in the session include:

- Insufficient consultation with local skills partnerships and regional authorities.
- Calls for a strategy to address workforce needs for net zero goals.
- Explicit measures to ensure inclusivity for learners with special educational needs and disabilities.
- Need for clearer, less complex qualification pathways, including craft and vocational skills.
- Flexibility and effectiveness of the reformed levy to address employer needs.

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

Suicide and Mental Health of Young People: Tatton – Westminster Hall debate

On Tuesday 26 November, there was a Westminster Hall debate on the suicide and mental health of young people in Tatton. This debate was tabled by Rt Hon Esther McVey MP (Conservative).

During the debate, the following exchange on university student suicides took place:

Helen Grant MP (Conservative): Over the past 10 years in England and Wales, one student has died every four days as a result of suicide. Despite that forlorn tragedy, the law remains unclear about the duties and responsibilities universities have towards their often very vulnerable young students. Will the Minister meet me and members of the LEARN Network and ForThe100 to discuss the introduction of a statutory duty of care for all higher education providers?

Minister for Care, Stephen Kinnock MP: I thank the hon. Lady for that important intervention. I am happy to meet her and the LEARN Network. The Government cannot do all this alone; we need to work in partnership with all sorts of different stakeholders, including universities and the higher education sector. We would support any partnership working that we can do.

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

Forthcoming business

Work of the Department for Science Innovation and Technology – HoC SIT Committee oral evidence

On Tuesday 3 December from 2:30pm, the House of Commons Science, Innovation and Technology Committee will hear oral evidence from the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, Rt Hon Peter Kyle MP, and Sarah Munby, Permanent Secretary of DSIT.

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

Work by the Department of Education and the Foreign Development and Commonwealth Office to promote the attractiveness of higher education sector internationally – HoL oral question

On Wednesday 4 December, there will be a House of Lords oral question on the work by the Department of Education and the Foreign Development and Commonwealth Office to promote the attractiveness of higher education sector internationally. This question was tabled by Lord Blunkett (Labour).

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

Financial sustainability of higher education – Westminster Hall debate

On Thursday 5 December from 3:00pm, there will be a Westminster Hall debate on financial sustainability of higher education. This debate was tabled by Adam Thompson MP (Labour)

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

Written questions and statements

Higher Education: VAT

Ian Sollom MP (Liberal Democrats): To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of exempting VAT charges for universities that undertake shared services as a cross-sharing group. [UIN 14160]

Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury, James Murray MP: Universities can already benefit from exempting VAT charges for shared services within a cost sharing group providing certain conditions are met. This enables them to make efficiency savings by working together and sharing qualifying costs without incurring additional irrecoverable VAT.

Higher Education: Apprentices

Rebecca Long Bailey MP (Independent Labour): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to (a) support providers and (b) encourage the uptake of higher education degree apprenticeships. [UIN 14097; Grouped Question: 14096]

Minister for Children and Families, Janet Daby MP: This government knows that earnings for those undertaking higher apprenticeships compare well to the earnings of first-degree graduates five years on. The latest data shows the median first-degree graduate earnings five years after graduation were £29,900 compared to £33,800 for level 4 apprentices and £31,380 for level 5+ apprentices.

In addition, latest data shows that 95% of those who achieved a level 6 apprenticeship in 2020/21 moved into sustained employment or sustained employment and learning in the following academic year.

The department will work with Skills England to ensure that degree apprenticeships continue to offer good value for money and drive economic growth.

Higher Education: Finance

Steffan Aquarone MP (Liberal Democrats): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the adequacy of the financial stability of the higher education sector in (a) Norfolk and (b) nationally. [UIN 14242]

Minister for Children and Families, Janet Daby MP: The financial position of individual higher education (HE) providers is highly commercially sensitive. As such, it would be inappropriate to comment on the financial stability of HE providers in any individual local authority area.

The department recognises that the financial environment of the HE sector is challenging. The Office for Students' (OfS) update on the financial sustainability of the HE sector, published 15 November, states that up to 72% of HE providers could face a deficit in 2025/26 if they do not take mitigating action. The OfS has rightly affirmed that HE providers must take bold action to secure their long term sustainability. As autonomous bodies independent of government, it is for providers to decide on effective business models and to how to manage their finances.

However, in recognition of this challenging financial environment, this government has taken action to support the sector. The government has acted decisively to accept in full the recommendations of the independent review of the OfS undertaken by Sir David Behan. Sir David has been appointed as interim OfS Chair to oversee the important work of refocusing their role to concentrate on key priorities, including the HE sector's financial stability. The department continues to work closely with the OfS to monitor any risks and to ensure there are robust plans in place to mitigate them.

Moreover, the government has made the difficult decision to increase tuition fee limits in line with forecast inflation. As a result, the maximum fee for a standard full-time undergraduate course in the 2025/26 academic year will increase by 3.1%, from £9,250 to £9,535. The government also recognises the impact that the cost-of-living crisis has had on students. Maximum loans for living costs for the 2025/26 academic year will increase by 3.1%, from £10,227 to £10,544 for an undergraduate student living away from home and studying outside London. Longer term funding plans for the HE sector will be set out in due course.

As my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education set out in her oral statement on 4 November, this government will secure the future of HE so that students can benefit from a world class education for generations to come.

Writing: Standards

Chris Bloore MP (Labour): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment her Department has made of trends in the standard of writing in (a) primary schools, (b) secondary schools and (c) universities since 2015. [UIN 14575; Grouped Question: 14518]

Minister for School Standards, Catherine McKinnell MP: High and rising school standards are at the heart of the government's mission to break down barriers to

opportunity and give every child the best life chances. The government has established an independent Curriculum and Assessment Review which will seek to deliver, amongst other things, an excellent foundation in core subjects of reading, writing and maths. The review group will publish an interim report early in 2025 setting out their interim findings and confirming the key areas for further work. The final review with recommendations will be published in autumn 2025. In the meantime, the department will continue to consider how to best support writing standards at all ages.

At the end of the academic year in which children turn five, which is usually reception year, each child's level of development must be assessed against the 17 early learning goals set out in the early years foundation stage (EYFS) statutory framework. In the 2022/23 academic year, just 71% of children met the expected level of development in writing. The EYFS reforms were introduced in September 2021. As part of those reforms, the EYFS Profile was significantly revised. It is therefore not possible to directly compare assessment outcomes with earlier years.

In 2024, the key stage 2 national curriculum assessments in England showed that 72% of pupils met the expected standard in writing. The method of assessing writing changed in 2017/18, when 78% of pupils met the expected standard, therefore 2024 results are not directly comparable to 2015. In 2015, 87% of pupils achieved a level 4 or above in the writing teacher assessment.

The English language GCSE aims to provide all students with robust foundations in reading and good written English, and with the language and literary skills which are required for further study and work. While 50% of this GCSE assesses writing, the results do not directly reflect changes in the standard of writing over time, due to the way GCSEs are graded using comparable outcomes. In 2024, 61.6% of pupils entering the exam achieved a grade 4 or above. GCSEs were reformed for teaching in schools from September 2015 onwards, with first examinations in summer 2017, when 70.8% of pupils achieved a grade 4 or above.

The government takes very seriously the need for high academic standards in higher education (HE), as does the Office for Students (OfS), the independent regulator of HE in England. HE providers are autonomous organisations, responsible for ensuring the standards of students' work. However, the OfS explored the standard of writing in a sample of providers in its 2021 report 'Assessment practices in English higher education providers: Spelling, punctuation and grammar', which sets out the OfS's view that students should be assessed on spelling, punctuation and grammar in order to maintain quality and protect standards.

As part of the OfS's 'B4 Registration' condition, HE providers must establish academic regulations that are designed to ensure the effective assessment of technical

proficiency in the English language in a manner which appropriately reflects the level and content of the applicable HE course.

Students: Loans

Jodie Gosling MP (Labour): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of increasing the parental income thresholds used to determine the level of support for maintenance loans. [UIN 14500]

Minister for Children and Families, Janet Daby MP: The department needs to ensure that the student funding system is financially sustainable. The department recognises the impact that the cost-of-living crisis has had on students, which is why the highest levels of support are targeted at students with household incomes of £25,000 or less.

For the 2025/26 academic year, the department will be increasing loans for living costs by 3.1%, which is in line with the forecast rate of inflation based on the RPI All Items Excl Mortgage Interest (RPIX) inflation measure. Vulnerable groups of students eligible for benefits, such as lone parents and some disabled students, qualify for higher rates of loans for living costs. This ensures that most support is targeted at students from the lowest income families, while keeping the student finance system financially sustainable.

There is much more to do to expand access and improve outcomes for disadvantaged students. That is why the department has announced that it expects the higher education sector to do more to support students by working with the government and the Office for Students and by making the most of the Lifelong Learning Entitlement. The department will be setting out longer term plans for the sector next year.

British Students Abroad: EU Countries

Richard Baker MP (Labour): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to help support students to study in the EU. [UIN 14544]

Minister for Children and Families, Janet Daby MP: The Turing Scheme is the UK government's global programme to provide grants for students to study and work anywhere in the world, including in the EU. Students can develop new skills, gain international experience and boost their employability. For the 2024/25 academic year, education providers and other eligible organisations from across the UK have been allocated over £105 million to send more than 43,000 students on study and work placements across the globe.

Countries in the EU are popular destinations for UK students supported by the Turing Scheme, with EU countries making up five out of the top ten most popular destinations across both the 2022/23 and 2023/24 academic years.

The Turing Scheme breaks down barriers to opportunity by prioritising the most disadvantaged students, requiring education providers to demonstrate how their project will support them and provide additional grant funding for participants from disadvantaged backgrounds. In addition to travel and living costs, this funding covers items that students may need to be able to travel, including vaccinations, visa applications, passports and insurance costs.

Apprentices: Taxation

Neil O'Brien MP (Conservative): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how much and what proportion of apprenticeship levy funds were spent on Level 7 Apprenticeships in each year since the creation of the levy. [UIN 15014]

Minister for Children and Families, Janet Daby MP: The apprenticeships budget in England is used to fund training and assessment for new apprenticeship starts in apprenticeship levy and non-levy paying employers, and to cover the ongoing costs of apprentices already in training and any additional payments made to employers and providers.

The table below shows spend on Level 7 apprenticeships, by both levy-paying and non-levy paying employers in England, and total spend on the apprenticeship programme.

Financial Year	Overall spend on Level 7 apprenticeships (£ million)	Total spend (£ million)	Proportion of total spend (%)
2017/18	12	1,586	1
2018/19	50	1,738	3
2019/20	103	1,919	5
2020/21	165	1,863	9
2021/22	236	2,455	10
2022/23	234	2,458	10
2023/24	238	2,509	9

Spend is rounded to the nearest million and proportions to the nearest whole number.

Research: Budget October 2024

Blake Stephenson MP (Conservative): To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the potential impact of the Autumn Budget 2024 on UK R&D. [UIN 14526]

Minister for AI and Digital Government, Feryal Clark MP: The Secretary of State has regular discussions with the Chancellor on a range of issues. In the Autumn Budget, the Chancellor announced that total HMG investment in R&D is rising to a record allocation of £20.4bn in 2025/26, with DSIT's R&D budget rising to £13.9bn, a real terms increase of 8.5%. This investment increases Core Research funding to at least £6.1bn, protecting funding for the UK's world leading research base in real terms, and fully funds the UK's association with Horizon Europe. Further details on how this funding will be allocated will be set out in due course.

Copernicus Programme and Horizon Europe

Richard Baker MP (Labour): To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he is taking to maximise the benefits of rejoining the (a) Horizon and (b) Copernicus programmes. [UIN 14548]

Minister for AI and Digital Government, Feryal Clark MP: It is our priority to make Horizon association a success. Government have launched a series of initiatives have been launched to help UK organisations engage with the programme. These include a marketing campaign and large-scale events around the country to promote Horizon Europe, and pump priming support to help increase application numbers, delivered by the British Academy and Innovate UK. On Copernicus, DSIT has been working closely with the UK Earth observation sector to promote the opportunities from renewed participation in the EU Copernicus programme. This includes hosting two Copernicus industry days, investing £250m to support industry and academics to stay at the forefront of Earth observation and through the UK Space Agency. For both programmes, the Department is actively working with European partners to promote UK expertise and capabilities and encouraging collaboration opportunities.

Students: Fees and Charges

Lord Johnson of Marylebone (Conservative): To ask His Majesty's Government what is the reason for limiting higher education providers without a Teaching Excellence Framework award but with an Access and Participation Plan to undergraduate tuition

fee increases of only £25 for full-time courses in the 2024–25 academic year. [UIN HL2401; Grouped Question: HL2400]

Minister for Skills, Baroness Smith of Malvern: The government recognises that UK higher education (HE) creates opportunity, is an engine for growth in our economy and supports local communities. In recognition of the financial challenges the sector is facing, the government has made the difficult decision to increase tuition fee limits for the 2025/26 academic year in line with the forecast rate of inflation of 3.1%. This will provide additional financial help for HE providers in 2025/26 after seven years of no increases to maximum tuition fees, meaning that fee limits have not kept pace with inflation.

Maximum fees for approved (fee cap) providers without a Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) award and with an access and participation plan will increase by £275 in the 2025/26 academic year from £9,000 to £9,275.

This 3.1% increase is in line with the same percentage uplift to maximum fees for approved (fee cap) providers with a TEF award and with an access and participation plan from £9,250 to £9,535.

There are 58 providers in the approved (fee cap) category of the Office for Students (OfS) Register that do not have a TEF award but do have an access and participation plan for 2024/25. The OfS Register, with these providers, can be viewed here: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/for-providers/regulatory-resources/the-ofs-register>.

Erasmus+ Programme

Susan Murray MP (Liberal Democrats): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans she has to provide students with support in place of the Erasmus+ programme. [UIN 14799]

Minister for Children and Families, Janet Daby MP: The Turing Scheme is the UK government's global programme to provide grants for students to do study and work placements anywhere in the world, including in the EU. Students can develop new skills, gain international experience and boost their employability. Since its introduction following the UK's departure from the Erasmus+ programme, the Turing Scheme has provided funding to support more than 160,000 international placements. In addition to travel and living costs, for students from disadvantaged backgrounds the Turing Scheme covers items that students may need to be able to travel, including vaccinations, visa applications, passports and insurance costs.

For the 2024/25 academic year, over £105 million has been allocated to send more than 43,000 students from across the UK on study and work placements around the world.

Research: Finance

Chi Onwurah MP: To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, whether he plans to consult the research sector on the Government's plans for 10 year budgets for R&D activities. [UIN 14937]

Minister for AI and Digital Government, Feryal Clark MP: We recognise the importance of stakeholder engagement and are actively involving stakeholders from the research sector throughout the process. Further details on ten-year budgets will be set out in the Spring as part of the next phase of the Spending Review.

Nurses: Universities

Danny Beales MP (Labour): To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what assessment his Department has made of trends in the levels of applications to nursing university courses. [UIN 15539]

Minister for Secondary Care, Karin Smyth MP: The following table shows the number of applicants, by the June deadline, to undergraduate nursing courses, for all domiciles, in England, each year from 2019 to 2024:

Year Applicants

201931,780

202037,990

202145,740

202243,170

202336,400

202433,560

Source: published by the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS), available at the following link:



<https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate-statistics-and-reports/ucas-undergraduate-releases/applicant-releases-2024-cycle/2024-cycle-applicant-figures-30-june-deadline>

Final applicant numbers for the 2024 cycle will be published by UCAS before the end of the year. The drop in nursing applicants follows the unprecedented demand for healthcare courses during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the number of applicants continues to outstrip the places on offer. Nursing training places are competitive, and lead to an attractive and important career in the National Health Service.

We are working closely with NHS England, universities, and UCAS to ensure that everyone who wants to pursue a rewarding healthcare career in nursing has the support and opportunities to do so.

Sector news

Response to Invest 2035: the UK's modern industrial strategy – UW publication

On Monday 25 November, Universities Wales published its response to the Industrial Strategy consultation.

The response recommends the government:

- Reflect the distinct context of the four UK nations within the Industrial Strategy, including the subsectors that present the greatest growth potential for devolved nations and the different enablers and barriers that exist across the four UK nations.
- Ensure the delivery of the Industrial Strategy includes mechanisms for engaging across the breadth of the UK, taking into account the distinct demographic, business and innovation contexts.
- Ensure that UK funding opportunities reflect the different business and research environments across the UK
- Review the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to provide long-term funding that supports collaboration on a Wales-basis
- Provide stability and certainty on migration policy to help improve the UK's attractiveness to international talent and bolster the UK's ability to force international partnerships.
- Ensure international trade agreements serve as catalysts for cross-border education and research and reflect the strengths of different parts of the UK and areas of devolved responsibility.
- Be cautious in utilising England-specific structures and mechanisms, such as Skills England, for delivering UK-wide industrial strategy aims, or when that approach is unavoidable, ensure mitigations are in place.
- The Industrial Strategy Council should engage with devolved administrations, devolved funding agencies (ie Medr) along with key research and innovation organisations in the devolved nations such as universities.

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

Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey 2024 – AdvanceHE report

On Tuesday 26 November, AdvanceHE published the results of their annual assessment of postgraduate student experiences in the UK, providing critical insights into the evolving landscape of higher education.

Key findings include:

- Satisfaction levels are now at 84% - the highest level reported.
- Overseas students (87%) are more satisfied with their course than home students (80%), with those from China, India and Nigeria all reporting high levels of overall satisfaction.
- Overall satisfaction for disabled students is lower than average at just over three quarters (77%).
- Almost 2 in 10 (16%) respondents have considered leaving their course, with more than a quarter (27%) of all respondents citing cost of living concerns as negatively impacting their studies 'a lot'.

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

Strategy 2030 – AdvanceHE strategy

On Wednesday 27 November, AdvanceHE published its Strategy 2030 – ‘Working with you to transform higher education’. Following extensive consultation, the strategy comprises three core strategic priorities aligned with the needs of the sector:

1. Maximising membership impact and value
2. Supporting leadership, management and governance development for transformational change
3. Developing educational excellence for the higher education of the future.

These priorities are underpinned by three critical cross-cutting themes: sustaining progress in equity, diversity and inclusion; embedding sustainability; and building capability for technology-enabled excellence and efficiency.

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

What do graduates do? 2024/25 – Prospects Luminate report

On Wednesday 27 November, Prospects Luminate published a report offering a comprehensive look at the employment outcomes of UK-domiciled graduates who completed their studies in 2021/22.

Key findings include:

- The majority of graduates (59%) were in full-time work 15 months after graduating, while 10.8% were in part-time employment.
- Of those graduates in work, 75% were in professional-level employment.
- 8.8% of graduates in work were self-employed or actively working towards this goal.
- 6.7% of graduates were engaged in further study, while 10.5% were both working and studying.
- Just 5.6% were unemployed, slightly higher than the previous year, but these figures still indicate a relatively healthy labour market.

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

University Mental Health Charter Reports Package 2024 – Student Minds collection

On Wednesday 27 November, Student Minds published a University Mental Health Charter (UMHC) Reports Package to mark the five-year anniversary of the framework. This special collection includes research & evaluation, insights, and developments from the UMHC Framework, Programme, and Award, produced with the intention to support continuous improvement in student and staff mental health and wellbeing across UK higher education institutions.

The collection includes:

- The first UMHC Award Assessment Insights Report, analysing and reporting on areas of good practice, common challenges and recommendations from Assessors.
- Reporting on improvements that have strengthened the UMHC offering over the last five years, and plans for the future captured in our UMHC Development & Continual Improvement Report.
- Evaluation of the impact of the UMHC Framework, Programme and Award and recommendations for development from our partners at UCLan.
- The updated UMHC Framework, including reference to literature, research, and guidance published since 2019.

You can [explore the full collection](#).

Aligning the Lifelong Learning Entitlement and the Growth and Skills Levy – HEPI policy note

On Thursday 28 November, the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) and Instructure published a policy note providing a detailed analysis of emerging policies related to skills development, including the Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE) and the Growth and Skills Levy (GSL), addressing how they may be implemented to reflect the new Labour Government's priorities.

Recommendations include:

- The Office for Students (OfS) should continue to consider how modular learning can be regulated appropriately without undue regulatory burden. This new regulatory framework should be developed in close collaboration with the sector. The OfS should also work closely with other further and higher education regulators to prevent regulatory overlap or contradiction.
- Develop a clear, easy-to-use and widely communicated mechanism for building qualifications between the LLE and GSL pathways. This function may sit with the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) which has committed to 'working with the sector to establish a verified qualification and credit account'.
- The Department for Education (DfE) should consider developing a mechanism for employers to fund modular learning in the academic pathway, allowing the learner both to self-fund and be employer-funded through their modular learning journey.
- Encourage the awarding of 'exit' qualifications at Levels 4 and 5 during undergraduate degree study and the use of these as stepping stones to further study.

You can [read the full policy note](#).

UK Government Industrial Strategy consultation response – US briefing

On Thursday 28 November, Universities Scotland published its response to the Government's consultation on *Invest 2035: the UK's Modern Industrial Strategy*.

The response highlights the strong alignment between Scottish universities' strengths and the eight growth-driving sectors identified, positioning the sector as a vital

partner in delivering the skills and innovations required to achieve the Strategy's aims of economic growth and prosperity.

It also advocates for:

- Close collaboration between the UK and Scottish Governments in delivering tailored programmes to support regions.
- More public investment in fundamental research, infrastructure and commercialisation supports that strengthen the diffusion of innovation and technologies.
- A role for universities in developing sector growth plans and on the governing Industrial Strategy Council.

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

Immigration system statistics, year ending September 2024 – Home Office data

On Thursday 28 November, the Home Office published its quarterly statistics on people coming to UK, extensions of stay, total in asylum system, irregular migration, citizenship, EUSS, asylum, detentions and returns.

Key study visa statistics include:

- There were 392,969 sponsored study visas granted to foreign students in the year ending September 2024, 19% fewer than the previous year but 46% higher than 2019.
- Nearly two-thirds (61%) of student visas in the latest year were for masters level courses.
- In the first 9 months of 2024 (January to September), visas issued to dependants of students fell by 84% to 17,978 compared to the same period in 2023 (there were 16% fewer main applicants over the same period).

You can [explore the full data](#).

Reason for international migration, international students update: November 2024 – ONS article

On Thursday 28 November, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) published an article providing further insights into their long-term international migration, provisional: year ending June 2024 bulletin, focusing on estimates of long-term international students and their dependants, as well as analysis of their characteristics and migration patterns.

Key insights include:

- Long-term net migration of non-EU+ international migrants who initially arrived in the UK on a study-related visa decreased to 262,000 for year ending (YE) June 2024 compared with our updated YE June 2023 estimates of 326,000, but this remains higher than five years ago (YE June 2019).
- Emigration of non-EU+ migrants who initially arrived on a study-related visa increased from 51,000 in YE June 2022 to 113,000 in YE June 2024; this includes those who emigrated but had transitioned onto a different visa type during their time in the UK.
- More non-EU+ students and their dependants have been staying longer, and nearly 1 in 2 transitioned to a different visa type after three years from YE June 2021; an increase from 1 in 10 after three years from YE June 2019.
- There was an increase in the number of those arriving on a study-dependant visa, particularly those of Nigerian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi nationality, since YE June 2019 until YE June 2023; however, the number of dependants immigrating decreased in YE June 2024 following government policy changes.
- The proportion of study to study-dependant visas varies substantially between nationalities, particularly for YE June 2023 arrivals; overall 55% of Nigerian study-related visas were dependants compared with 1% of Chinese nationality.
- Estimates for YE June 2021, YE June 2022 and YE June 2023 have been updated in line with revisions to long-term international migration; YE June 2024 estimates are provisional and are subject to revision in future publications, as assumptions about length of stay or departure are replaced by actual data.

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

Student support for higher education in England 2024 - SLC statistics

On Thursday 28 November, the Student Loans Company (SLC) published the latest statistics on student support paid to students in the form of loans and grants, or to their university or college in the form of tuition fees.

Key insights include:

- 3.8% decrease in higher education student support in academic year 2023/24, at £19.9 billion
- Tuition Fee Loan take-up for accelerated degrees continues to increase
- Provisional figures show continued, yet slowed decline in the number of Postgraduate Master's Loans issued in 2023/24
- Provisional figures for 2023/24 indicate 4.8% reduction in the take-up of Postgraduate Doctoral Loans

You can [explore the full data](#).

Shares in Students: A New Model for University Funding – IEA report

On Thursday 28 November, the Institute of Economic Affairs published a report arguing for a fundamental shift in how universities are funded.

Recommendations include:

- **Flawed incentives in current lending:** Where government issues student loans it frees universities from repayment risk which encourages them to focus on recruitment rather than on improving graduate employability. This results in growing enrolments but poor employment outcomes, with one in five graduates earning less than if they had not attended university.
- **Structural reform:** The paper proposes that universities lend directly to students. This arrangement of income contingent loan (ICL) financing will ensure universities only succeed financially if their students do.
- **Fee autonomy with conditions:** Universities should be allowed to set their own fees above £9,535, which becomes a cap on the level of the state loan, provided they make available ICLs for any excess, ensuring access for all.

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

Response to the UK government’s consultation, ‘Invest 2035: the UK’s modern industrial strategy’ – UUK publication

On Friday 29 November, Universities UK published its response to the Industrial Strategy consultation, setting out how universities’ role in supporting local and national growth underpins the missions the government has identified as its priorities.

The response calls for the following:

- Universities should be considered as a foundational sector within the industrial strategy, given their role in driving growth across all eight growth-driving sectors, in all parts of the country.
- The university sector should be formally represented on the Industrial Strategy Council, in recognition their foundational role.
- The government should establish local growth partnerships where Mayoral Combined Authorities do not exist to capitalise on the contribution all our universities make, and will make, to growth.
- The industrial strategy and its accompanying sector plans must align with local strengths, partnerships and projects in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

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