



All-Party Parliamentary University Group

Weekly update

28 April – 2 May 2025

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

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Parliamentary business

Department for Education- Oral Questions

On Monday 28 April, Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson and her ministerial team took questions on the floor of the House. Shadow Minister Neil O'Brien spoke about business concerns regarding the future of the apprenticeship levy, including around higher apprenticeships. Minister Janet Daby stated that government had heard many representations about level 7 apprenticeships and would set out its position, which no timescale given.

Rachael Maskell (Lab), Vikki Slade (Lib Dem) and Imran Hussain (Lab) all asked about university funding and job cuts. The Education Secretary and Minister Daby both confirmed that the government was committed to 'fixing the foundations' of higher education, and that universities were autonomous institutions. 'Summer' was repeatedly stated as the expected timescale for the publication of reforms. You can watch the [full session here](#).

Forthcoming business

Innovation, growth, and the region – House of Commons SIT Committee oral evidence

On Tuesday 6 May from 2:30pm, the House of Commons Science, Innovation, and Technology Committee will take oral evidence as part of their inquiry into ‘innovation, growth, and the regions.’

Witnesses include:

- Mathias Ruach, Director and Chair of the Board at Fraunhofer UK
- Neil Lee, Professor of Economic Geography at London School of Economics (LSE)
- Louis Taylor, CEO at British Business Bank
- Kristen McLeod, Chief Strategy Officer at British Business Bank

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

Tackling barriers to educational opportunities in semi-rural areas – WH debate

On Wednesday 7 May from 6:30pm, a Westminster Hall debate titled ‘tackling barriers to education opportunities in semi-rural areas’ will take place. This debate has been tabled by Josh Dean MP (Labour).

You can [watch the session](#).

Eliminating antisemitism on university campuses – House of Lords short debate

On the afternoon of Wednesday 7 May, a short debate on ‘eliminating antisemitism on university campuses’ will take place in the House of Lords. This short debate has been tabled by Lord Cryer (Labour).

You can [watch the session](#) and [view a speaker list](#).

Written questions and statements

Written questions and statements have not been included in this week's Political Affairs digest. Please contact appg@universitiesuk.ac.uk if you have any questions.

Sector news

Unlocking innovation: A 20-year quantitative analysis of university-business collaboration – National Centre for Universities and Business

On Monday 28 April, NCUB published a report providing an analysis of university-business collaboration income in the UK over the past 20 years. Key findings include

- Income to universities from collaboration with businesses has increased significantly: from £900 million to £1.5 billion (62%) between 2004 and 2023.
- Universities that generated very little collaboration income in 2004 and/or have a low research capacity saw the steepest growth rates between then and 2023.
- The majority of the growth in collaboration income came from contract services and intellectual property, which together accounted for 86% of the overall increase.

You can read more [here](#).

Optimising UK R&D funding: lessons from global competitors – Russell Group

On Monday 28 April, the Russell Group published a comparison of different nations' research funding systems, with funding from Wellcome, commissioned by PwC. Their findings suggest that a key strength of the UK system is the use of performance-based block grant funding and its balance with expert-driven, project grant funding, which the Russell Group says is likely contributing to the UK's research excellence. Meanwhile innovation excellence is found where there are targeted incentives to support industry engagement, including university-business collaborations.

Key trends they identify include:

- Block grant funding plays an important role in research quality, complementing project-based funding
- Incentivising university-industry engagement helps drive innovation excellence
- Streamlining funding mechanisms helps to improve efficiency and reduce bureaucracy

You can read more [here](#).

Annual Report for 2024 – Office of the Independent Adjudicator

On Tuesday 29 April, the OIA published their Annual Report. The Report includes information about:

- The number and outcomes of complaints the OIA received and closed
- Trends in complaints
- Examples of some of the complaints received and their approach to them

Key figures include:

- The OIA received 3,613 new complaints in 2024, 15% more than in 2023 (3,137).
- The OIA met all targets for timeliness of their processes and closed their highest ever number of complaints: 3,645 cases, 9% more than in 2023 (3,352). They dramatically improved their service for students and providers, with 94% of students receiving a decision on their complaint within six months.

You can read more [here](#).

Gone international: a new generation – Universities UK International

On Tuesday 29 April, Universities UK International released a report exploring the impact of studying, working and volunteering abroad on students' academic success and career outcomes.

Key findings include

- Mobility rates have declined:
 - Factors driving this decline include the COVID-19 pandemic and new visa requirements for European mobility post-Brexit.

- Equitable access to mobility is improving:
 - While overall participation has declined, students from underrepresented backgrounds have seen increases in their share of mobility opportunities.
- Mobility is associated with improved graduate outcomes among several student groups:
 - Mobile students from less advantaged backgrounds were more likely to achieve a first-class degree and secure professional-level jobs, and less likely to be unemployed, than their non-mobile peers.

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

Mainstreaming and Equality Outcome Report 2025-29 – Scottish Funding Council

On Wednesday 30 April, the Scottish Funding Council published their equality mainstreaming report for the period 2025-29. It details their work to support the colleges and universities that they fund to meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. It also explores their work to deliver on the Public Sector Equality Duty. This report also details progress made against the Equality Outcomes set for the period 2021-25 and sets out new Equality Outcomes for the period 2025-29.

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

Students and trade unions deliver open letter to Scottish Government – NUS Scotland

On Thursday 1 May, NUS Scotland sent the Scottish Minister for Higher and Further Education, Graeme Dey MSP, an open letter signed by representatives from Scotland's student movement and trade unions. The letter urges the Scottish Government to take greater action to address the crises in the Scottish education system. It urges the government to commit to enshrining education as a public good and to embedding a long-term, sustainable funding model that is not reliant on fees. It also urges that they work with the UK Government to make the UK a more welcoming place for international students and staff.

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