



# The All-Party Parliamentary **University Group**

## University APPG weekly update

28 August – 1 September 2023

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

If you would like more information on parliamentary business, or advice on engaging with Parliament or a parliamentarian, please contact:

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# Parliamentary business

## **House of Commons recess**

On Thursday 20 July, the House of Commons rose for Summer recess. It will return on Monday 4 September.

## **House of Lords recess**

On Wednesday 26 July, the House of Lords rose for Summer recess. It will return on Monday 4 September.

# Forthcoming business

## **Turing Scheme – Westminster Hall debate**

On Tuesday 5 September from 11:00am, the Turing Scheme will be debated in Westminster Hall. This debate has been tabled by Wendy Chamberlain MP (Liberal Democrat).

You can [watch the session](#) here.

## **LLE Bill – report stage**

In the afternoon of Tuesday 5 September, the Lifelong Learning (Higher Education Fee Limits) Bill will be scrutinised at Report Stage in the House of Lords.

You can [read the latest amendments](#) here and [watch the session](#) here.

## **Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill – oral evidence**

On Tuesday 5 September (9:25am and 2:00pm) and Thursday 7 September (11:30am), oral evidence will be heard on the Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill. The witnesses are to be confirmed.

You can read [additional information on the Bill](#) here and watch the sessions here (Tuesday 5 September [9:25am](#) + [2:00pm](#), and Thursday 7 September [11:30am](#)).

# Written Questions

## Universities: Strikes

**Lord Bailey of Paddington:** To ask His Majesty's Government what discussions they are having with universities about the marking of students' examination and assessment papers given the current industrial action by university staff; and whether they plan to require universities to reimburse students whose papers have not been marked. [UIN HL9673]

**Baroness Barran:** It is hugely disappointing that students, many of whom have already suffered during the pandemic, are facing further disruption and uncertainty. It is imperative that higher education (HE) institutions continue to do everything within their powers to protect the interests of their students.

While the department plays no formal role in such disputes, we are concerned about the potential impact of the marking and assessment boycott on students, particularly those who are graduating and looking to enter the jobs market or progress to further study.

The department understands that the vast majority of students will remain unaffected by the industrial action and, in most cases, will receive their full results on time and progress and/or graduate as normal.

My right hon. Friend, the Minister for Skills, Apprenticeships and Higher Education has held discussions with the Russell Group, Universities UK and the Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA) to better understand the boycott's impact on students and the actions institutions are taking to minimise disruption. He has also written to the Russell Group and Universities UK, encouraging them to continue to do everything within their powers to protect the interests of students during this phase of industrial action.

HE institutions are working on minimising the disruption to their students in a variety of ways, including reallocating marking to other staff members and hiring external markers. Many HE institutions can award degrees when they have enough evidence of a student's prior attainment to do so. Others will be able to assign provisional grades to students to allow them to progress, and, once all papers have been marked, most institutions will award degree classifications that either remain as provisionally assigned or are uplifted to reflect the student's achievements.

On 12 June 2023, the Office for Students (OfS) wrote to institutions affected by the boycott to reiterate its expectations in relation to its conditions of registration. The OfS will continue to monitor this ongoing situation through their normal regulatory mechanisms and have published guidance to students on their rights during industrial action. This guidance is available at: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/for-students/student-rights-and-welfare/student-guide-to-industrial-action/> (opens in a new tab).

Students who have complaints about their HE experience should contact their institution in the first instance. Students in England and Wales may also raise a complaint with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA), which was set up to provide an alternative to the courts and is free of charge to students. Depending on the complaint, the OIA may recommend that compensation be awarded. Whilst compensating students for disruption is the responsibility of HE institutions, the OIA expects institutions to comply with their recommendations. Further information is available at: <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/> (opens in a new tab).

The department will continue to engage with the HE sector over the coming weeks to help better understand the boycott's impact on students and we hope an agreement between UCEA and University and College Union can be reached that delivers good value for students, staff and universities.

## **Students: Loans**

**Lord Storey:** To ask His Majesty's Government what percentage of graduates have not reached the salary level to start repaying their student loan. [UIN HL9717]

**Baroness Barran:** The exact information is not readily available or held centrally and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. The department can provide the following information, which was published on 15 June 2023, in the Student Loans in England (for financial year 2022/23) publication available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/student-loans-in-england-2022-to-2023/student-loans-in-england-financial-year-2022-23> (opens in a new tab).

The figures below classify borrowers with income contingent loans by their known status as of 30 April 2023. Until their loan balance is fully repaid or cancelled, borrowers can move into and out of any of the statuses.

As of 30 April 2023, of those who reached their repayment date between financial years 2000/01 to and including 2021/22, with at least one tax year processed, 18.8% are UK residents in live employment and not required to pay and 1.2% are residents outside of the UK and have not reached the repayment threshold for that country.

From those remaining, 25.3% have fully paid off their loans and 41.9% are repaying. A further 0.8% and 2.1% are currently in the UK tax system and marked as currently having no live employment at HMRC for fewer than 90 days or 90 days or longer, respectively, and 0.4% are awaiting first year tax return to determine if they earn above the threshold. A further 7% are known to be in the UK but not in the UK tax system and their status does not require repayment at this point. A further 1.5% reside outside of the UK and either have no details of income or are not currently repaying and their repayment status is being sought. Finally, 1% are not resident in the UK and have defaulted in arrears. This information is available via the attachment.

The figures included can be found in Table 3A(i)(ii) of the release is available [via the attachment](#).

# Sector News

## **Are vice-chancellors worth the pay they get? – HEPI report**

On Thursday 31 August, the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) published a new debate paper probing on how to set vice chancellor pay fairly.

Vice-chancellors bear huge responsibility as leaders of high-revenue organisations, and they are paid less than their colleagues at universities in both the USA and Australia. The report argues that rather than scapegoating institutional leaders, the higher education sector should have a serious and evidence-based debate on the topic.

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