



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

## University APPG weekly update

3 – 7 July 2023

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

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# Parliamentary business

## **Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill – Second Reading**

On Monday 3 July, the Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill received its Second Reading in the House of Commons.

Introducing the Bill for the government, Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), Rt Hon Michael Gove MP said the Bill delivered their 2019 manifesto commitment to ban public bodies from “imposing their own direct or indirect boycotts, disinvestments or sanctions campaigns against foreign countries”.

Several MPs voiced their concerns about the Bill’s contradictions with laws to protect freedom of speech.

Joanna Cherry MP (SNP) criticised the Secretary of State’s focus on Israel during his remarks and suggested that the Bill could contravene the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), including articles regarding freedom of belief. Michael Gove replied saying that nothing in the Bill conflicted with any aspect of the ECHR.

Rt Hon Sir Desmond Swayne MP (Conservative) noted concerns that the Bill would outlaw the voicing of opposition to the provisions of the Bill, saying it would introduce a “thought crime” provision. The Secretary of State said that the Bill would not restrict freedom of speech in “any way”.

Several Conservative MPs welcomed the Bill’s intent to tackle the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement aimed at Israel. Michael Gove singled out the BDS movement for asking public bodies to treat Israel differently from any other state. He proceeded to say that nothing in the Bill would prevent or impede criticism of Israel’s government or leaders and that it would help to tackle community cohesion issues and antisemitism.

Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi MP (Labour) highlighted legal advice received by the Labour Party which suggested that the Bill would contravene international law. Michael Gove said this legal advice was “flawed” and Sir Simon Clarke MP (Conservative) suggested that it had come from a lawyer with clear partiality on the issue of Israel and Palestine.

Richard Graham MP (Conservative) highlighted that the manifesto commitment that the Bill was based on, was “country-agnostic” and that there had been no mention of Israel or BDS. He also questioned the Bill’s potential contradictions, highlighting that a former Education Secretary had written to universities to ensure they allowed freedom of expression, but that Clause 4 of the Bill would go against this. The Secretary of State responded saying that it would have no effect on the exercise of freedom of speech, rather only preventing boycotts from being brought forward.

The Shadow DLUHC Secretary, Lisa Nandy MP said that Labour recognised the problem which the government was attempting to tackle, but that the Bill was “needlessly broad” with draconian powers and far-reaching effects.

Lisa Nandy also highlighted that Clause 7 of the Bill would give the Secretary of State or other relevant bodies such as the Office for Students (OfS) the power to issue notices requiring information to be handed over, if they suspect a statement expressing a moral or political view about foreign conduct. She highlighted that this would normally be protected by legal privilege and would enable OfS to have greater powers than those available to the security services. Former Education Secretary, Kit Malthouse MP echoed these concerns, saying it would give bodies like the OfS powers to look into legal advice individuals had taken as they contemplate investment decisions. In response, the Housing Minister Felicity Buchan MP said the powers were “far from being the unprecedented powers claimed” and were modelled on existing powers of regulators such as the OfS and the Pensions Regulator.

Dr Matthew Offord (Conservative) said he welcomed the Bill’s aims on behalf of his Jewish constituents, who had concerns about growing cases of antisemitism on university campuses. Lisa Nandy agreed that the aim was the right one but noted the Union of Jewish Students had also expressed significant concerns with the Bill. Bob Blackman MP (Conservative) also echoed concerns about the BDS implications for Jewish students on campuses, saying that this brand of “student politics” should not be permitted at universities or any other public institution.

Kit Malthouse said he was concerned about the Bill’s consequences for the Jewish community and that it could worsen and damage safety, rather than improve it. He also noted practical implications for institutions, including universities, around legal challenges from campaign groups and this would be extremely costly and time consuming for those institutions.

On the implications for free speech, Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Alicia Kearns MP (Conservative) said that Clause 4 would mean that a university vice-

chancellor could break the law by merely expressing that they would like to boycott products from Xinjiang, China or any illegal settlement. She also highlighted that the Bill would contradict with the recently passed Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act, stopping elected individuals from expressing moral disapproval. Dame Margaret Hodge MP (Labour) also noted the contradictions of the Bill with the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill, and called Clause 4, which would prohibit bodies from saying that they would participate in a boycott, even if this was purely hypothetical, a “gagging clause”.

In response to criticisms of Clause 4, Felicity Buchan reassured MPs that it only prevented public authorities from making statements of intent to boycott or divest, not simply expressing disagreement.

The Bill passed Second Reading and will now move to its Public Bill Committee stage in the Commons in the next Parliamentary session from September, having received a ‘carry-over’ motion.

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

## **Liaison Committee – work of the Prime Minister**

On Tuesday 4 July, the Liaison Committee heard oral evidence from the Prime Minister, Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP.

Steve Brine MP (Conservative), Chair of the Health and Social Care Committee, probed the Prime Minister on the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan. He asked why the new medical school places were only available from September 2025 when there was some capacity to make offers for domestic students in England for September 2024.

In his reply, the Prime Minister said the system needed to deal with other training beyond that in medical schools. He also explained the government were looking to streamline and increase the efficiency of the medical training process.

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

## **Prime Minister’s Questions**

On Wednesday 5 July, the Deputy Prime Minister, Rt Hon Oliver Dowden MP answered oral questions in the House of Commons.

Vicky Ford MP (Conservative) highlighted the graduation of students from the new medical school at Anglia Ruskin University in Chelmsford. She asked the Deputy Prime Minister, for a meeting to discuss doubling the size of the medical school. The Deputy Prime Minister agreed to meet to discuss the proposal.

Stephen Doughty MP, Shadow Minister for Europe, said that universities across the UK were home to world leading research, but thousands of jobs were now at risk due to the government's "dithering" negotiations with Horizon. He asked if the government were still committed to negotiating a deal. The Deputy Prime Minister said that since the Windsor Framework had been agreed, the government had had constructive conversations on Horizon, but would wait for the best deal for the British people and British universities.

Helen Hayes MP (Labour) raised the issue of the parents of a student who died by suicide still being held liable as guarantor for rent by a private accommodation provider. In his reply, Oliver Dowden described the situation as 'abhorrent', offering to look into the details of the case.

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

## **Adult and Further Education - Estimates debate**

On Wednesday 5 July, an Estimates debate was held to consider the expenditure by the Department for Education. The debate was focused on adult and further education.

John McDonnell MP (Labour) raised the issue of university funding. He highlighted that government funding for university teaching was now "70% below what it was a decade ago" and said that this fell well below European counterparts.

Turning to the industrial action at universities, he described the differential between vice-chancellor pay and that of the casualised workforce as being "abusive".

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

# Forthcoming business

## **Lifelong Learning (Higher Education Fee Limits) Bill - committee stage**

On Monday 10 July and Thursday 13 July, the Lifelong Learning (Higher Education Fee Limits) Bill will be debated at Committee Stage in the House of Lords.

You can watch the sessions ([10 July](#) and [13 July](#)) [here](#).



# Written Questions

## Apprentices

Rachael Maskell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will incentivise universities to generate more higher apprenticeships. [UIN 191837]

Robert Halfon: Higher and degree level apprenticeships provide people with high quality training and are important in supporting productivity, social mobility and widening participation in higher education and employment.

In the 2021/22 academic year, there were over 106,000 apprenticeship starts at levels 4-7. That is 7.6% higher than the previous year. Starts at levels 6 and 7 increased 10.3% in 2021/22 to over 43,000 when compared to the previous year.

Employers have developed over 310 high quality apprenticeship standards at levels 4,5,6 and 7 in industries such as engineering and manufacturing, health and science, digital and transport and logistics to help meet their industry skills needs.

The department wants to accelerate the growth of higher and degree apprenticeships across all regions and encourage higher education providers to expand their existing offers or develop new ones. The department is therefore providing an additional £40 million in funding over the next two years, on top of the £8 million investment in the 2022/23 financial year.

The department continues to promote higher and degree level apprenticeships to employers in all sectors and regions, and it is for individual employers to choose which apprenticeships they offer, and at what level, according to their needs.

The department publishes the higher and degree apprenticeship vacancy listing twice a year, with the next released planned for November, which will highlight over 350 vacancies across the country that are available for young people to apply for in 2023 and 2024. The vacancy listing is available at:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-and-degree-apprenticeships>(opens in a new tab).

The department is working hard to ensure that young people across the country get the right information to help them decide on the best route for their future. From autumn 2023, the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service will expand their service so that young people can see more personalised options, including degree

apprenticeships. From 2024, students will then be able to apply for apprenticeships alongside degrees, meaning young people can find the right option for them, all in one place.

## **Students: Finance**

Paula Barker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of providing (a) financial grants, (b) interest free and (c) lower interest loans to students in the context of rises in the cost of living. [UIN 191687]

Robert Halfon: The government recognises the cost of living pressures that are impacting students. The department has made £276 million of student premium and mental health funding available for the 2023/24 academic year to support students who need additional help to succeed, including disadvantaged students.

We have continued to increase maximum loans and grants for living and other costs each year, with a 2.3% increase for the 2022/23 academic year, and a further 2.8% increase for 2023/24. In addition, students eligible for benefits, such as those who are responsible for a child, qualify for higher rates of loans to help them with their living costs at university.

Students who have been awarded a loan for living costs for the 2022/23 academic year that is lower than the maximum, and whose household income for the 2022/23 tax year has dropped by at least 15% compared to the income provided for their original assessment, have been able to apply for their entitlement to be reassessed.

The government has no plans to reintroduce maintenance grants, as it believes that income-contingent student loans are a fair and sensible way of financing higher education. In 2022, we had record numbers of 18-year-olds going to university, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds. An English 18-year-old from a disadvantaged background today is 86% more likely to go to university than in 2010.

The student funding system must provide value for money for all at a time of rising costs. It is important that a sustainable student finance system is in place, that is fair to both students and taxpayers. Interest is an important part of this. If interest payments were removed altogether, it would increase the burden to taxpayers, not all of whom will attend university. The government does not plan to further reduce interest rates on student loans. In 2022/23, student loan interest reduced public sector net debt by around £4.8 billion according to published data from the Spring 2023 Office for Budget Responsibility Economic Outlook.

Student loans are different to commercial personal loans. Monthly student loan repayments are calculated by income rather than by interest rates or the amount borrowed. No borrower will be repaying more per month as a result of changes to interest rates. Borrowers are protected. If income is below the relevant repayment threshold, or a borrower is not earning, repayments stop. Any outstanding loan balance, including interest accrued, is written off after the loan term ends, or in case of death or disability, at no detriment to the borrower. Student loans are subsidised by the taxpayer, and the government does not make a profit from the loan scheme.

To further protect borrowers, where the government considers that the student loan interest rate is too high in comparison to the prevailing market rate, it will reduce the maximum Plan 2, Plan 3 and Plan 5 interest rate by applying a cap.

New students who start courses on or after 1 August 2023 will receive their loans on new Plan 5 terms. Students with Plan 5 loans will benefit from a reduction in the interest rate to Retail Price Index only. This change ensures that borrowers on the new Plan 5 terms will not repay more than they originally borrowed over the lifetime of their loans, when adjusted for inflation.

Decisions on student finance have had to be taken alongside other spending priorities to ensure the system remains financially sustainable and the costs of higher education are shared fairly between students and taxpayers, not all of whom have benefited from going to university.

## **Africa: Science**

Lord Boateng: To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the economic and social impact of collaboration in scientific research between British and African universities and research institutes. [UIN HL8586]

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Scientific research collaborations between British and African research institutions make vital contributions to economic growth and the UK's wider development in Africa. Scientific collaborations are helping to overcome many of the most significant global challenges, from public health emergencies to climate change, to energy, education and more. HMG therefore invests in a wide range of UK-Africa scientific collaborations, including partnerships with the including the Science Foundation for Africa, the African Research Universities Alliance, and the Science Granting Councils Initiative.

## **Overseas Students: Cost of Living**

Navendu Mishra: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what support her Department is providing to international students to meet the increased cost of living. [UIN 191217]

Robert Halfon: As set out in the Government's International Education Strategy, the department is committed to working with the higher education (HE) sector to enhance the international student experience to ensure they have an enjoyable and valuable experience whilst in the UK. The International Education Strategy can be accessed at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/international-education-strategy-global-potential-global-growth/international-education-strategy-global-potential-global-growth>(opens in a new tab).

In addition, universities provide a range of dedicated support to their international students pre-arrival, on-arrival and during their studies.

As set out in Home Office guidance, international students who come to the UK on a student visa are required to have money to support themselves for the duration of their studies. Further information on student visa requirements can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/student-visa>(opens in a new tab). Eligible international students can also access providers' hardship funds, should they need to do so.

Generally, to qualify for HE student support from Student Finance England, a person resident in England must have settled status or a recognised connection to the UK. This includes persons who are covered by the European Union Withdrawal Agreement, have long residence in the UK or who have been granted international protection by the Home Office. There are also requirements associated with ordinary residence in the UK.

## **Universities: Freedom of Expression**

Matt Western: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate she has made of the number of higher education providers under investigation by the Office for Students relating to breaches of (a) academic freedom and (b) freedom of speech in June 2023. [UIN 189871]

Claire Coutinho: The Office for Students (OfS) is the independent regulator of higher education in England and is an arm's length body. The OfS have confirmed that they are conducting an investigation in relation to freedom of speech and academic

freedom; however, their investigations are normally confidential. Any decisions to publish information about their investigation is a matter for the OfS.

## **Students: Loans**

Marquees of Lothian: To ask His Majesty's Government what estimate they have made of how much the new Plan 5 loans for higher education starters will increase the average cost of higher education for graduates; and whether the new arrangements will result in graduates in England paying more and for longer than under the present system. [UIN HL8726]

Baroness Barran: The Plan 5 reforms will make the student loan system fairer for taxpayers and fairer for students, helping to keep the system sustainable in the long term.

The new loan plan asks graduates to repay for longer and from an income threshold of £25,000, but also increases certainty for borrowers by reducing interest rates to match inflation only. This change ensures that borrowers on the new Plan 5 terms will not repay, under those terms, more than they originally borrowed over the lifetime of their loans, when adjusted for inflation. Lower earners will still be protected. If a borrower's income is below the repayment threshold of £25,000 per year, they won't be required to make any repayments at all.

A comprehensive equality impact assessment of how the student loan reforms may affect graduates, including detail on changes to average lifetime repayments under Plan 5, was produced and published in February 2022. The assessment is attached.

## **Prisoners: Higher Education**

Julian Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, with reference to Government grants statistics 2020 to 2021, published on 31 March 2022, what assessment his Department has made of the effectiveness of the Steps to Success grants. [UIN 191078]

Damian Hinds: Grant-funded activity across His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) is monitored, quality-assured and measured through the Grants Governance Board, which has oversight of all grants funded by HMPPS, both prior to award and throughout the lifetime of the grant.

HMPPS ensures all grants awarded to voluntary, community, and social enterprise organisations are effective in helping to reduce reoffending, delivered in accordance with the Government Grants Functional Standard.

Grant managers are responsible for monitoring delivery, and agreed outcomes and budgets are defined in quarterly and end of year Reports. A Senior Responsible Officer will have oversight of grants within their specific business area and will be required to provide assurance in relation each grant, including the governance, risk management, and financial aspects.

## **Higher Education: Standards**

Baroness Warwick of Undercliffe: To ask His Majesty's Government what progress they have made on developing a new kitemark scheme for higher education, as recommended in the final report of the Independent Review of Children's Social Care, published on 23 May 2022; and what is their assessment of how this kitemark will work alongside the National Network for the Education of Care Leavers Quality Mark. [UIN HL8634]

On 2 February 2023, the department published 'Stable Homes, Built on Love', our strategy for reforming children's social care, which included a commitment to introducing a gold standard accreditation scheme for further and higher education institutions. We have established an expert advisory group, including the National Network for the Education of Care Leavers, to develop the accreditation in partnership with the sector and consider how it will work alongside existing schemes.

## **Foundation Courses**

Baroness Wolf of Dulwich: To ask His Majesty's Government, for each academic year since 2018–19, how many students were enrolled in one-year foundation year courses in English higher education institutions. [UIN HL8636]

Baroness Barran: The data for all three tables below cover English-domiciled foundation year students studying at approved fee cap English higher education (HE) institutions and further education (FE) colleges.

The data is currently unpublished and is based on internal department analysis of Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data. As such, figures are rounded to the nearest five in line with the following HESA guidance:

<https://www.hesa.ac.uk/about/regulation/data-protection/rounding-and-suppression-anonymise-statistics>(opens in a new tab).

The price group data for the 2018/19 academic year is not directly comparable to price group data for the following academic years because of a change in the system for classifying subjects from the 2019/20 academic year onwards.

The number of students enrolled onto one-year foundation courses is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Full-person equivalent of foundation year entrants studying one-year courses at HE institutions and FE colleges in England since the 2018/19 academic year.**

Academic Year	Number of students undertaking a one-year foundation year course
2018/19	35,995
2019/20	43,395
2020/21	53,590
2021/22	69,325

## **Private Rented Housing: Students**

Mary Kelly Foy: To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, what assessment he has made of potential impact of the abolition of fixed term tenancy agreements on the (a) availability and (b) cost of privately rented student accommodation. [UIN 192194]

Rachel Maclean: I refer the Hon. Member to the answer I gave to Question UIN 190095(see below) on 22 June 2023.

The Department is carefully considering the impact of our reforms on the student housing market. We recognise there is a general annual lettings cycle and are considering solutions, such as a ground for possession that enables landlords to guarantee vacant possession for next year's tenants. Any solution needs to balance the needs of both students and landlords, and we will continue to engage with the sector. I am happy to discuss this matter further with my Hon. Friend.

## **Medicine: Students**

Stephen Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps he is taking to increase the number of medical school places. [UIN 191152]

Will Quince: This NHS Long Term Workforce Plan recently published by NHS England sets out an aim to double the number of medical school places in England to 15,000 places a year by 2031/32, and to work towards this expansion by increasing places by a third, to 10,000 a year, by 2028/29.

This will build on the recent increase in number of medical school places the Government has funded. There are now an additional 1,500 medical school places per year for domestic students in England – a 25% increase, taking the total number of medical school places in England to 7,500 each year. This expansion was completed in September 2020 and delivered five new medical schools in England.



# Sector News

## Principles on use of AI in education – Russell Group

On Tuesday 4 July, the Russell Group announced a new set of principles to ensure that university students and staff can capitalise on the opportunities technological breakthroughs provide for teaching and learning.

Developed in partnership with AI and educational experts, the new principles recognise the risks and opportunities of generative AI and commit Russell Group universities to helping staff and students become leaders in an increasingly AI-enabled world.

The five principles are:

- Universities will support students and staff to become AI-literate.
- Staff should be equipped to support students to use generative AI tools effectively and appropriately in their learning experience.
- Universities will adapt teaching and assessment to incorporate the ethical use of generative AI and support equal access.
- Universities will ensure academic rigour and integrity is upheld.
- Universities will work collaboratively to share best practice as the technology and its application in education evolves.

Chief Executive of the Russell Group, Dr Tim Bradshaw said: “The transformative opportunity provided by AI is huge and our universities are determined to grasp it. This statement of principles underlines our commitment to doing so in a way that benefits students and staff and protects the integrity of the high-quality education Russell Group universities provide.”

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

## **Opportunity England – AOC report**

On Tuesday 4 July, the Association of Colleges (AOC) published a new report which calls on whoever wins the next general election to create a new system for lifelong learning from the age of 16.

The report – ‘Opportunity England’ – recommends that colleges, universities, and other providers should be regulated through one tertiary system to avoid excess regulation and to enable a clear strategy to support all adults get the skills they need throughout life.

It calls for a system in which:

- Every young person and adult will be supported to attain and maintain the skills they will need throughout their lives.
- Every employer is supported to innovate, improve productivity, and develop their workforce to have the skills needed in the transition to a green and flourishing economy.
- Every community boasts of post-16 learning opportunities which meet the needs of all their citizens through an ecosystem of learning organisations delivering a coherent, diverse, and compelling set of opportunities for people to learn and train.
- Colleges are recognised, regulated, and funded to play the unique roles that only they can play in providing a truly comprehensive set of learning, training and education opportunities to people of all ages and at all levels whilst supporting employers to innovate and grow.

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

## **Women and Equalities Committee report**

On Wednesday 5 July, the Women and Equalities Committee published a report on ‘attitudes towards women and girls in education settings.’ This followed oral and written evidence taken in Autumn 2022.

Key recommendations for the higher education sector include:

- The Office for Students (OfS) should implement a new condition of registration to place mandatory obligations on universities to tackle sexual harassment and sexual violence.
- A nationwide sexual harassment and sexual violence awareness campaign that particularly targets male university students should be developed.
- There should be compulsory evidence-based bystander intervention programmes for all first-year university students.

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

## **Horizon Europe association**

On Wednesday 5 July, it was reported that UK and EU negotiators had agreed a draft deal on Britain’s re-entry into the Horizon Europe research program after months of talks.

The Prime Minister will be presented with the draft deal by officials this weekend ahead of a meeting with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen on Tuesday 11 July where the final agreement may be confirmed.

You can [read more](#) here.

## **Tackling racial harassment in higher education: progress since 2020 – UUK report**

On Wednesday 5 July, Universities UK (UUK) published an update to the ‘tackling racial harassment in higher education’ report published in November 2020.

The update reveals the impact of this guidance and sets out how universities can improve further.

To drive forward further progress, senior leaders at universities are recommended to:

- Ensure work to tackle racial harassment is informed by internal and external expertise in this area.
- Ensure that there is accountability for making progress in tackling racial harassment within the university.

- Work with staff and students with lived experience of racial harassment on meaningful participation and co-production.
- Communicate the university’s evidence and resulting approach to racial harassment clearly to staff and students.
- Review and continuously improve the training offered to staff and students.

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

## **Policy Exchange free speech event**

On Wednesday 5 July, Claire Coutinho MP, Minister for Children, Families and Wellbeing, addressed a Policy Exchange event titled ‘Freedom of Speech and the Leaders of Tomorrow’.

The speech covered high profile cases such as that of Professor Kathleen Stock and Dr Tony Sewell when evidencing the need to legislate on free speech. She praised some vice-chancellors, saying that the ones she had spoken to were personally committed to free speech and academic freedom and had reacted positively and openly to what government were trying to achieve. However, she noted that university-leaders also needed to ensure that this positive work was not undermined by “well-intentioned internal processes that stand in the way of free speech.”

She said the Act needed to balance with other duties such as the Equality Act but recognised that this was challenging at times.

On the new OfS Director for Freedom of Speech, the Minister set out that Professor Arif Ahmed would act as both a guide to the sector, engaging with universities to ensure they understand the new duties and that they are well-equipped to take them on, and as an investigator, with powers to act when he thinks universities have crossed the line.

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

## **Labour ‘opportunity’ mission**

On Thursday 6 July, Rt Hon Sir Keir Starmer MP, leader of the Labour party, unveiled his ‘opportunity’ mission.

The mission documents praise universities for their civic role, research activity, and international reputation.

It states that Labour will ‘harness the possibilities of the Lifelong Loan Entitlement’, ensuring that courses meet skills needs.

On creating a fairer deal for students and graduates, the mission document states ‘reworking the present system gives scope for a month-on-month tax cut for graduates, putting money back in people’s pockets when they most need it. For young graduates this is a fairer system, which will improve their security at the start of their working lives and as they bring up families.’

Universities UK Chief Executive, Vivienne Stern MBE, commented: ‘We strongly support Labour’s vision of expanded access to lifelong learning. Universities have worked hard to improve participation for less advantaged students, and we are proud of the progress that has been made in opening up education to all.’

You can [read the mission document](#) here.