



The All-Party Parliamentary **University Group**

University APPG weekly update

30 January – 3 February 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

Oral question on Horizon Europe

On Tuesday 31 January, Viscount Stansgate (Labour) tabled an oral question on the possibility of the UK participating in Horizon Europe.

Viscount Stansgate celebrated the success of the Horizon Europe programme and highlighted the “real damage” caused by not being associated. He called for clarification on (1) what would happen to the Horizon Europe guarantee fund when it runs out in March, (2) the £2 billion allocated for future association, and (3) the “brain drain” caused by lack of clarity. He noted that Plan A was preferable and called on the government to deliver this. Responding on behalf of the government, Lord Callanan, agreed with the value of the Horizon Europe programme and noted that the EU refused to progress with the negotiations.

Lord Krebs (Crossbench) said that when the UK was a member of Horizon Europe, the UK “took more money out than it put in”. He asked whether an alternative funding arrangement would compensate appropriately for this. He further raised the “leadership role” the UK had in designing research programmes and shaping the future of Horizon Europe. He called on the government to provide an assessment to the loss of this leadership role. In his reply, Lord Callanan reiterated his remarks on the benefits of Horizon Europe and said he hoped the EU would have “second thoughts” on the negotiations.

Lord Hamilton of Epsom (Conservative) asked why the UK could not be an associate member such as Israel or Tunisia. Lord Callanan cited the 15 countries that had associated to Horizon Europe and continued in his blame of the EU.

Baroness Walmsley (Liberal Democrat) raised the recent Science and Technology committee report which found the cost of visas and upfront health surcharges were up to six times greater than the UK’s competitors. She said this risked the UK “losing its scientists” and called on the government to address this. In his reply, Lord Callanan said he would pass these remarks to the Home Office.

Lord Winston (Labour) raised the importance of international collaboration within research laboratories that Horizon Europe facilitated. Lord Callanan said that alternative arrangements should account for this.

Lord Mair (Crossbench) highlighted the damage caused by uncertainty and requested a timescale for the alternative arrangements. Lord Callanan replied that the “time is approaching” to make a final decision.

Lord Cunningham of Felling (Labour) asked whether there was an explanation for the “unkind” behaviour of the European Union or whether Horizon Europe was being “used” for negotiations in other ways. Lord Callanan clarified that it was a separate issue from the Northern Ireland protocol and the government remained ready to associate.

Lord Bassam of Brighton (Labour) said the deadline to make a decision was “fast approaching” and meaningful negotiations needed to commence. He called on the government to confirm whether 31 March 2023 was the cut-off date for association and that a Plan B would be prepared as an alternative. Lord Callanan did not address these points in his reply.

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

Lifelong Learning (Higher Education Fee Limits) Bill published

On Wednesday 1 February, the Lifelong Learning (Higher Education Fee Limits) Bill received its first reading in the House of Commons.

The new proposed legislation will permit the Secretary of State to set fee limits at the resolution of an individual credit for a variety of courses - allowing for fee loans to meet the proportional value of a full year of an undergraduate honours degree.

A date for second reading has yet to be set.

You can [read the published Bill](#) here.

Forthcoming business

Home Office oral questions

On Monday 6 February from 2:30pm, the Secretary of State for the Home Department, Rt Hon Suella Braverman MP, and her ministerial team, will answer oral questions in the House of Commons.

You can [read a list of tabled questions](#) here and [watch the session](#) here.

Science and Technology Committee – delivering a UK science and technology strategy inquiry

On Tuesday 7 February from 10:15am, the House of Lords Science and Technology Committee will hear evidence as part of its inquiry into “delivering a UK science and technology strategy”. The committee will take evidence from:

- Professor Sarah Main, Executive Director at Campaign for Science and Engineering
- Professor Richard Jones, Vice-President for Regional Innovation and Civic Engagement at University of Manchester
- Professor Graeme Reid, Professor of Science and Research Policy at University College London (UCL)

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

Treasury oral questions

On Tuesday 7 February from 11:30am, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP, and his ministerial team, will answer oral questions in the House of Commons.

You can [read a list of tabled questions](#) here and [watch the session](#) here.

Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill: Consideration of Lords Amendments

In the afternoon of Tuesday 7 February, the House of Commons will consider Lords amendments of the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill.

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

Recess

The House of Commons and House of Lords will rise on Friday 10 February. Both Houses will return on Monday 20 February.

Written Questions

Research: Finance

Lord Jones: To ask His Majesty's Government what amount was provided in research and development grants to (1) the steel industry, (2) the ship building industry, (3) the aerospace industry, and (4) the building and construction industries, in (a) 2018, and (b) 2019. [HL4616]

Lord Callanan: I refer the noble Lord to the answer I gave him on 2nd November 2022 to Question HL2736. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy does not hold the requested information. Government innovation funding is generally not allocated on a sector-by-sector basis but is instead targeted towards specific research questions. Many research, development and innovation programmes support multiple sectors. For example, the Government invested £22.25m in 2018/19 and £28.34m in 2019/20 through the Transforming Construction Challenge (TCC), which supported energy, digital and manufacturing innovators to work with the construction sector clusters and understand trends, barriers and opportunities within them. Monitoring and evaluation are at the heart of good policy making, so we are also ensuring this is in place for all initiatives that help to support the UK's clusters to realise their potential. For example, we are establishing a monitoring and evaluation framework to assess the impact of Innovation Accelerators, which is a new pilot programme supporting Glasgow, Greater Manchester and the West Midlands to become major, globally competitive centres for research and innovation.

Freedom of Expression: Antisemitism

Matt Western: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make it her policy to require the person appointed as Director for Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom to commit to respecting the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's definition of Anti-Semitism. [UIN 125446]

Claire Coutinho: The department has encouraged higher education providers to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism and has asked the Office for Students (OfS) to keep a record of those providers which have done so.

The department is clear that antisemitism is abhorrent. We remain committed to the IHRA definition and our belief that providers should adopt it. Students have a right to

enjoy their university experience without the fear of antisemitic activity on university grounds and should be protected from harassment and violence.

The Director for Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom will be a member of the board of the OfS, with responsibility for overseeing the free speech functions of the regulator.

The Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill will require reasonably practicable steps to be taken to secure freedom of speech within the law. The Director will oversee the free speech functions in that context.

Travel: Concessions

Rupa Huq: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, whether he has made an assessment of the potential merits of extending the (a) scope of and (b) eligibility for (i) free and (ii) discounted student travel in the context of the cost of living crisis. [UIN 126745]

Richard Holden: Local authorities already have the powers to extend both the scope and eligibility of free and discounted student travel if it makes sense in their area.

Medicine: Higher Education

Lord Rose of Monewden: To ask His Majesty's Government which universities are offering medical school places to overseas students only; and how many students are enrolled on those courses in the current academic year. [HL 4801]

Lord Markham: Brunel University is the only university which exclusively offers medical places to overseas students. The information requested on enrolment is not collected centrally. The medical school at Brunel University is not required to report the intake data as it is a private and independent provider of undergraduate medical education and does not receive any funding from the Office for Students or Health Education England.

Education: Industrial Disputes

Julian Sturdy: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of industrial action in the education sector on the academic performance of students in this academic year. [UIN 120922]

Nick Gibb: Industrial action is not in the best interest of pupils, and the Department is concerned by action that disrupts teaching, particularly following disruption from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The starting salary for a newly qualified teacher is at least £28,000 and this is set to rise to £30,000. In Inner London the starting salary is more; at least £34,500. Teachers receive annual pay rises through an independent pay review process, and many teachers also see greater uplifts by progressing up the pay scales.

Most teachers in the first few years of their career will receive pay rises from progression on top of the headline award, which could mean an increase of up to 15.9% this year, and around 40% of experienced teachers below the top of their pay range will also receive pay increases through progression or promotion, on top of the 5% pay award. In addition, teachers' pensions include a 23.6% employer pension contribution.

The Department is meeting unions regularly to listen to their concerns and work to avert strike action. If strikes do go ahead there will undoubtedly be impacts on the delivery of education and the Department has a duty to help parents and families understand how this will affect them. In the event of strike action at a school, the school leaders or local authority that manages the school will take all reasonable steps to keep the school open for as many pupils as possible. In some schools there may be little or no impact from strike action but in others it may mean that changes are made to the way they operate. Parents can find more information on strike actions in schools in the Department's Education Hub blog:
<https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2023/01/16/everything-you-need-to-know-about-strike-action-in-schools-and-colleges/> (opens in a new tab).

The Department has updated the 'handling strike action in schools' guidance (opens in a new tab), which is available at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/handling-strike-action-in-schools> (opens in a new tab).

Schools should prioritise vulnerable children, children of critical workers and pupils due to take public examinations and other formal assessments, if there is a need to restrict attendance. The use of remote education where provision in school can't be delivered is also advised.

For further education (FE), colleges are responsible for setting the pay of their teaching and support staff. The Department is increasing the level of overall funding

in colleges, so that they can recruit, retain and develop staff. An extra £1.6 billion is available for 16-19 education in the 2024/25 financial year compared with 2021/22. This is in addition to the £291 million for 16-19 education in 2021/22, and the £400 million that the Department provided in 2020/21. The Department is also funding a package of direct support for the further education workforce in 2022/23, to continue to support the colleges with the recruitment, retention and development of teachers.

Universities are autonomous and responsible for the pay and pension provision of their staff. While the Government plays no role in such disputes, the Department hopes all parties can reach an agreement that delivers good value for students, staff and the universities.

This Department believes that students should be at the heart of the higher education (HE) system. The Department set up the Office for Students (OfS) to regulate the HE sector in England, protect student rights and ensure the sector is delivering real value for money. The OfS expects institutions to do all they can to avoid disruption for students, and has also highlighted institutions' obligations under consumer protection law in relation to the effects of industrial action.

Research: Finance

Chi Onwurah: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, for what reasons publicly-funded research in research institutions such as the National Oceanography Centre is not fully funded by Government. [UIN 127760]

George Freeman: The National Oceanography Centre (NOC) delivers world-class science and innovation working in close partnership with UKRI's Natural Environment Research Council (NERC). The NOC receives funding from NERC 's non-competitive funding and the wider community to pursue science that is nationally and internationally important.

The NOC was part of NERC. From 1 November 2019, NOC operates as an independent research institute, a charitable company limited by guarantee. This new structure ensures that NOC is more agile, financially more resilient with more freedoms and flexibilities. Independent research institutes are funded to deliver their missions collaborating with a greater range of external partners including business and other funders.

Office for Students

Matt Western: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to increase the registration fee universities are required to pay to the Office for Students. [UIN 125445]

Robert Halfon: Under the Higher Education and Research Act 2017, the department sets the Office for Student's (OfS) registration fees, which are paid by registered higher education (HE) providers.

No final decision has been made on any fee increase. The department is currently considering the level those fees should be set at for the 2023/24 academic year, to ensure that the OfS can perform its important functions effectively, ensuring students receive high quality education and value for money.

This includes continuing investigations to address pockets of low quality HE provision and deliver new duties under the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill.

Apprentices: Degrees

Jim Shannon: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department is taking steps to increase uptake of degree apprenticeships among young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. [UIN 125357]

Robert Halfon: Education is a devolved matter and this response outlines the information for England only.

The department wants more people from disadvantaged backgrounds to benefit from apprenticeships at all levels, and is working to expand degree apprenticeships, ensuring these opportunities are accessible to young people. We are making up to £8 million available in the 2022/23 financial year to Higher Education (HE) institutions through the Strategic Priorities Grant to enable them to expand provision and form new employer partnerships.

Our 'Get the Jump' skills for life campaign is raising awareness and understanding of all the different education and training pathways for young people aged 14-19. The campaign will help to raise awareness of T-levels, apprenticeships and higher technical qualifications, so young people can make more informed decisions about their future.

The department continues to increase outreach to students of all backgrounds through the Apprenticeship Support and Knowledge (ASK) programme. The ASK programme provides schools and further education colleges across England with a free bespoke package of comprehensive information and support about apprenticeships, ensuring that students of all backgrounds are aware of the benefits of apprenticeships, including degree apprenticeships.

The department works with employers to showcase higher and degree apprenticeship vacancies on GOV.UK. The listing published in November featured over 300 vacancies across the country from over 60 employers. These vacancies are promoted in schools and colleges through the ASK programme.

The department is working with the Office for Students to improve access to and participation in HE. We are also working with UCAS to establish the needs of young people, the people who influence their career decisions, and employers to determine how our respective systems and services can be improved so that more young people consider and secure apprenticeships.

Apprentices: Degrees

Nick Fletcher: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many UK nationals began a degree apprenticeship by sex in 2022. [UIN 128728]

Robert Halfon: In the 2021/22 academic year, there were 43,200 apprenticeship starts in England at Level 6 and 7 (degree level), of which 22,000 were female and 21,200 were male. Information on the nationality of learners is not held for government funded further education courses via the Individualised Learner Record.

Further information on apprenticeship starts can be found in the apprenticeships and traineeships statistics publication, which can be accessed at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/apprenticeships-and-traineeships>

Midwives: Higher Education

Dan Jarvis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, how many (a) Full Time Equivalent and (b) total midwifery academics there were in England in each of the last 10 years; and if she will provide an age profile of that group in (i) 2013, (ii) 2018 and (iii) at the most recent point for which figures are available. [UIN 129816]

Robert Halfon: The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) collects and publishes statistics on the higher education (HE) workforce in their staff record.

The staff record includes the cost centre that members of the workforce are employed in. Midwifery is not identified as a separate cost centre, so the data presented here show statistics on academic staff that fall within the nursing and allied health professions [1] cost centre, which includes midwifery academics.

HESA publish academic staff data by full-person equivalent (FPE) and full-time equivalent (FTE)[2], but do not publish all requested information for England specifically so, where available, this has been set out in the tables below. The department's analysis has been used to supplement the published data. The latest year for which HESA have published this level of detail on cost centres is 2020/21. HESA will publish data for 2021/22 on 21 February 2023.

Table 1 shows the full published time series for the UK for FPE and FTE. Table 2 shows the corresponding time series for England, with previously unpublished FPE figures produced by DfE. Table 2 data for 2012/13 and 2013/14 could not be produced in time for inclusion. Table 3 shows the age breakdowns for 2018/19 and 2020/21 for FPE in the UK (published by HESA) and England (previously unpublished). Table 3 data for 2013/14 could not be produced in time for inclusion.

To [access the tables please follow this link](#).

Students: Cost of Living

Colleen Fletcher: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to help support students in (a) Coventry, (b) the West Midlands and (c) England with the rising cost of living. [UIN 129941]

Robert Halfon: The government reviews the support provided to cover students' living costs on an annual basis.

The government recognises the additional cost of living pressures that have arisen this year which have impacted students.

On 11 January 2023, the department announced a one-off reallocation of funding to add £15 million to this year's student premium to support additional hardship requests. There is now £276 million of student premium funding available this

academic year to support disadvantaged students. This extra funding will complement the help universities are providing through their own bursary, scholarship and hardship support schemes. The department works with the Office for Students (OfS) to ensure universities support students using both hardship funds and drawing on the student premium.

Many universities in the West Midlands area, including but not limited to, Coventry University, the University of Wolverhampton, the University of Birmingham and Birmingham City University have allocated money to hardship, scholarship and bursary funds to support students, and have detail available about these funds on their websites.

We have continued to increase maximum loans and grants each year with a 2.3% increase for the current 2022/23 academic year and a further 2.8% increase for 2023/24.

Loans that support with students' living costs are a contribution towards their living costs while attending university, with the highest levels of support targeted at students who need it the most, such as students from low-income families. 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 tax year 2022-23 has dropped by at least 15% compared to the income provided for their original assessment, can apply for their entitlement to be reassessed.

All households will save on their energy bills through the Energy Price Guarantee and the £400 Energy Bills Support Scheme discount. Students who buy their energy from a domestic supplier are eligible for the energy bills discount. The Energy Prices Act passed on 25 October 2022 includes the provision which requires landlords to pass any benefits they receive from energy price support onto end users, as appropriate. Further details of the requirements under this Act are set out in the legislation.

The Energy Bill Relief Scheme will provide a price reduction to ensure that all businesses and other non-domestic customers are protected from high energy bills this winter, including universities and private purpose-built student accommodation providers.

Students: Housing

Lord Taylor of Warwick: To ask His Majesty's Government what support they are providing to university students struggling to find accommodation due to high demand. [HL4810]

Baroness Barran: The department plays no role in the provision of student residential accommodation. Universities and private accommodation providers are autonomous and are responsible for setting their own rent agreements. It is for local areas, through their Local Plans, and in response to local needs and concerns, to determine the level of student accommodation required in their area. The department continues to work alongside the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to engage with students and the higher education (HE) sector to understand the impact of existing and proposed new housing policies.

We encourage universities and private landlords to review their accommodation policies to ensure they are fair, clear, and have the interests of students at heart. This includes making accommodation available at a range of affordable price points where possible. We also encourage HE providers and private accommodation providers to work in partnership to help students make well-informed choices about their accommodation.

Medicine: Higher Education

Lord Rose of Monewden: To ask His Majesty's Government why they have reduced the number of funded university places for trainee doctors from 10,000 to 7,500 per annum in England. [HL 4800]

Lord Markham: There has been no reduction of the number of funded university places from 10,000 to 7,500 per annum in England. In 2020 and 2021, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to adjust school A-Level exams, the Government temporarily lifted the cap on medical school places for students obtaining the required A-Level grades and holding an offer from a Medical School in England resulting in intakes of 8,405 and 8,460 respectively.

Veterinary Medicine: Students

Matt Western: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to data by the Higher Education Statistics Agency entitled Higher Education Student Statistics:

UK 2021/22, published on 19 January 2023, what proportion of veterinary students that completed their training at UK higher education providers in the academic year 2021-22 were UK nationals. [UIN 130031]

Robert Halfon: The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) collects and publishes statistics on enrolments and qualifications obtained at UK Higher Education Providers (HEPs). The latest statistics refer to the 2021/22 academic year.

The table below shows the number of students that have qualified from their first degree from a UK HEP in a medical related subject, by domicile.

Full-person-equivalent¹ First Degree qualifiers in select subjects at UK Higher Education Institutions (HEPs) by domicile, in the academic year 2021/22

Subject area ²	UK domiciled ³ qualifiers	Non-UK domiciled ³ qualifiers	Total qualifiers	Percentage that are UK domiciled ³ qualifiers
Dentistry (CAH01-01-04)	1,210	100	1,310	92.2%
Medicine (CAH01-01-01, CAH01-01-02, CAH01-01-03)	8,365	1,285	9,650	86.7%
Nursing and midwifery (CAH02-04)	23,545	900	24,445	96.3%
Veterinary sciences (CAH05-01)	1,405	320	1,725	81.6%

Dentistry: Students

Matt Western: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to data by the Higher Education Statistics Agency entitled Higher Education Student Statistics: UK 2021/22, published on 19 January 2023, how many dentistry students completed their training at UK higher education providers in the academic year 2021-22. [UIN 130029]

Robert Halfon: The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) collects and publishes statistics on enrolments and qualifications obtained at UK Higher Education Providers (HEPs). The latest statistics refer to the 2021/22 academic year.

The table below shows the number of students that have qualified from their first degree from a UK HEP in a medical related subject, by domicile.

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Veterinary sciences (CAH05-01)	1,405	320	1,725	81.6%

Nurses: Students

Matt Western: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to data by the Higher Education Statistics Agency entitled Higher Education Student Statistics: UK 2021/22, published on 19 January 2023, how many nursing students completed their training at UK higher education providers in the academic year 2021-22. [UIN 130026]

Robert Halfon: The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) collects and publishes statistics on enrolments and qualifications obtained at UK Higher Education Providers (HEPs). The latest statistics refer to the 2021/22 academic year.

The table below shows the number of students that have qualified from their first degree from a UK HEP in a medical related subject, by domicile.

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Medicine: Students

Matt Western: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to data published by the Higher Education Statistics Agency entitled Higher Education Student Statistics: UK 2021/22, published on 19 January 2023, what proportion of medical students that completed their training at UK higher education providers in the academic year 2021-22 were UK nationals. [UIN 130025]

Robert Halfon: The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) collects and publishes statistics on enrolments and qualifications obtained at UK Higher Education Providers (HEPs). The latest statistics refer to the 2021/22 academic year.

The table below shows the number of students that have qualified from their first degree from a UK HEP in a medical related subject, by domicile.

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Veterinary sciences (CAH05-01)	1,405	320	1,725	81.6%

Higher Education: Liability

James Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of introducing a statutory duty of care for higher education institutions to students aged 18 and over. [UIN 129764]

Robert Halfon: The mental health and wellbeing of students, including suicide prevention, is a government priority. The department has been working closely with higher education (HE) providers and health colleagues to ensure that students are well supported during their time at university. We expect all HE providers to take suicide prevention with the utmost seriousness, focusing on prevention, providing information and places for students to find help, actively identifying students at risk, and intervening with swift support when needed.

HE providers are autonomous organisations, independent from the government. HE providers have a general duty of care to deliver educational and pastoral services to the standard of an ordinarily competent institution and, in carrying out these services, they are expected to act reasonably to protect the health, safety and welfare of their students. HE providers have a duty of care to not cause harm to their students through the university's own actions.

Students with disabilities, including mental health impairments, are protected under the Equality Act 2010 which prohibits discrimination and imposes a duty on HE providers to make reasonable adjustments where disabled students are put at a substantial disadvantage.

The NHS has statutory responsibility for delivering mental health services to the whole population, including students.

We work closely with the Department of Health and Social Care, the Office for Students (OfS), and the HE sector to support the student population. We have asked the OfS to distribute £15 million of funding this year as additional support to help students with the transition from schools and colleges to university. This is also to fund partnerships between universities and local NHS services to provide pathways of care for university students.

The department has been vocal in our support for the University Mental Health Charter, led by Student Minds and developed in collaboration with students, staff, and partner organisations. The Charter aims to drive up standards of practice across the HE sector. 60 universities on the Charter Programme form part of a UK-wide practice sharing network with access to events and opportunities to come together to improve their whole university approach to student and staff mental health. Programme members can also work towards the Charter Award, an accreditation scheme which recognises universities that demonstrate excellent practice.

The department has appointed university Vice-Chancellor Edward Peck as HE's first ever Student Support Champion. His role is to provide sector leadership and promoting effective practice in areas including mental health and information sharing. Professor Peck is engaging with families who have suffered bereavement due to students taking their own life during their time at university.

Students: Cost of Living

Ben Lake: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions she has had with the Welsh Government regarding the impact of the rising cost of living on students from England studying in Wales. [UIN 128698]

Robert Halfon: The department reviews living costs support on an annual basis and has continued to increase maximum loans and grants for living and other costs each year, with a 2.3% increase for the current academic year, 2022/23, and a further 2.8% increase for 2023/24. This would apply to all English domiciled students, including those which are studying at a university in Wales. 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.

Loans for living costs are a contribution towards students' living costs while attending university, with the highest levels of support targeted at students who need it the most, such as students from low-income families.

The government believes that income-contingent student loans are a fair and sensible way of financing higher education. It is only right that those who benefit from the system should make a fair contribution to its costs.

The department recognises the additional cost of living pressures that have arisen this year which have impacted students. However, education is a devolved matter, so additional financial support with cost-of-living pressures for students in Wales will be the responsibility of the devolved government.

All households, including those in Wales, will save on their energy bills through the Energy Price Guarantee and the £400 Energy Bills Support Scheme discount. Students who buy their energy from a domestic supplier are eligible for the energy bills discount. The Energy Prices Act 2022, passed on 25 October 2022, includes the provision to require landlords to pass benefits they receive from energy price support, as appropriate, onto end users. Further details of the requirements under this Act are set out in the legislation.

The Energy Bill Relief Scheme provides a price reduction to ensure that all businesses and other non-domestic customers, including universities and private purpose-built student accommodation providers, are protected from high energy bills this winter.

Students: Loans

Matt Western: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what proportion of all students in London received the minimum student maintenance loan for each year since 2012 for which figures are available. [UIN 127872]

Robert Halfon: This data is not routinely held by the Department, the Student Loans Company (SLC) have provided the figures below. The data supplied outlines the number and proportion of students who received the minimum or maximum student maintenance loan whilst studying in or outside London by academic year, and the average maintenance loan whilst studying in or outside London by academic year.

The [data is available](#) here.

Students: Loans

Ben Lake: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department plans to make further assessments of the adequacy in the rise in maintenance loans in the context of rising levels of inflation. [UIN 128699]

Robert Halfon: Education is a devolved matter, and the response outlines the information for England only.

The government reviews living costs support on an annual basis and has continued to increase maximum loans and grants for living and other costs each year. On 11 January 2023, the department announced a one-off reallocation of funding to add £15 million to this year's student premium, to support additional hardship requests. There is now £276 million of student premium funding available this academic year to support students who need additional help. This extra funding will complement the help universities are providing through their own bursary, scholarship, and hardship support schemes.

The department works with the Office for Students to make it clear that universities can draw on this funding to boost their own hardship funds and support students in need. We welcome the fact that many Universities have allocated additional money to hardship, scholarship and bursary funds to support students. Universities will have detail available about these funds on their websites.

In the 2022/23 academic year, there has been an increase of 2.3%, and there will be a further increase of 2.8% for the 2023/24 academic year. 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. 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 tax year 2022-23 has dropped by at least 15% compared to the income provided for their original assessment, can apply for their entitlement to be reassessed.

Loans for living costs are a contribution towards students' living costs while attending university. The highest levels of support are targeted at students who need it the most, such as students from low-income families.

To help with the cost of living all households will save on their energy bills through the Energy Price Guarantee and the £400 Energy Bills Support Scheme discount. Students who buy their energy from a domestic supplier are eligible for the energy bills discount. The Energy Prices Act 2022, passed on 25 October 2022, includes the provision to require landlords to pass benefits they receive from energy price support, as appropriate, onto end users. Further details of the requirements under this act are set out in the legislation.

A Treasury-led review is being undertaken to consider how to support households with energy bills after April 2023.

Any student who has concerns should speak to their university about securing additional support.

British Students Abroad

Alex Sobel: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what comparative assessment her Department has made of the accessibility of study abroad for those who would have been eligible for the Erasmus scheme. [UIN 131261]

Robert Halfon: Under the Withdrawal Agreement negotiated with the EU, the UK will continue to participate fully in the 2014-2020 Erasmus+ Programme until project completion. Certain projects may continue up to 2024.

The UK government is supporting access to study abroad through the Turing Scheme. The scheme provides grant funding for education providers and organisations to offer their students, learners and pupils undertake study or work placement across the globe. Participants can study or work anywhere in the world, subject to Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office travel advice.

For the 2022/23 academic year, the Turing Scheme is providing funding for over 38,000 pupils, learners, and students across the UK to study and work in over 160 destinations across the globe. More than half of these opportunities are for participants from disadvantaged backgrounds. In the 2021/22 academic year, the Scheme provided funding for over 41,000 participants, with 48% of this for participants from disadvantaged backgrounds.

For comparison, Erasmus+ participant numbers for higher education (HE) were 15,784 in the 2015/16 academic year, 16,559 in 2016/17, 17,048 in 2017/18 and 16,596 in 2019/20. The Turing Scheme is providing funding for 23,472 HE placements in the 2022/23 academic year and provided funding for over 28,000 HE placements in

2021/22. Direct comparison across all sectors is not possible, given the data published by the European Commission for Erasmus+ doesn't specify numbers of student participants for other education sectors. Whilst Erasmus+ included some staff mobility, the Turing Scheme is focused on student placements.

In 2019/20, UK institutions received around €134 million of funding from the Erasmus+ programme. €41,257,969 of this was for in further education (FE) and vocational education and training (VET) and €87,621,663 in HE. In 2021/22 the Turing Scheme allocated £24,819,113.40 of funding in FE and VET, £67,001,941.25 in HE, and £6,710,407.60 in schools for student mobilities and accompanying staff. The figures for 2022/23 are £36,376,335.62, £62,115,424.80, and £7,616,999.60 respectively.

Sector News

AI threat to academic integrity briefing note

On Monday 30 January, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) published a briefing note to support institutions in tackling challenges to academic integrity amidst the rise of artificial intelligence tools.

The briefing paper provides an overview of what the artificial intelligence (AI) tools are and their wider implications for staff and students in upholding the principles of academic integrity. It outlines actions that providers can take to safeguard existing assessments and academic standards.

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

Higher Education Student Data 2021/22

On Tuesday 31 January, the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) published data related to student enrolment between 1 August 2021 and 31 July 2022.

Key findings include:

- 29% of students at UK higher education providers were enrolled on postgraduate courses, up from 24% in 2017/18
- Of the total 820,310 postgraduate students enrolled in 2021/22, 45% (372,500) were non-UK domiciled.
- 33,715 postgraduate students in 2021/22 were from EU countries, down from 43,765 in 2020/21.

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

Delivering the Healthcare Workforce of the Future briefing

On Tuesday 31 January, the University Alliance published a briefing on “Delivering the Healthcare Workforce of the Future”.

The briefing highlights four areas where universities, the NHS and government can work together to find solutions to the ongoing NHS workforce crisis:

- Involve the education sector in long-term NHS workforce planning
- Reform placement tariffs for nursing students
- Fully embrace simulation in nursing training
- Explore a new model for nursing education

Commenting on the briefing, Vanessa Wilson, CEO of University Alliance, said: “Ensuring universities have a seat at the table during national, regional, and local discussions on workforce planning is also crucial to growing the domestic workforce. There is huge potential for the higher education sector to scale up its nursing training provision, and, in doing so, alleviate the strain on NHS trusts and other clinical placement providers.”

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

10-point plan for degree apprenticeships

On Wednesday 1 February, Universities UK published its 10-point plan to grow degree apprenticeships. The plan promotes working with government, Ofsted, colleges, employers, and agencies such as the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE).

The report recommends:

- Reforming and simplifying the way degree apprenticeships are regulated, so that it’s efficient and fit for purpose.
- Refreshing promotion of degree apprenticeships, advice and guidance to employers and learners, especially targeting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).
- Ensuring that there are enough resources and support to guarantee the future success and growth of degree apprenticeships.

Commenting on the 10-point plan, Vivienne Stern MBE, CEO of Universities UK, said: “Degree apprenticeships have proven to be successful due to their joint development between employers and universities and the fact they enable students to learn while

they earn. With further collaboration between the government, the higher education sector and employers, degree apprenticeships could be developed further and can play a key role in plugging the skills gap in the UK.”

You can [read the full 10-point plan](#) here.

Robert Halfon addresses UUK degree apprenticeships conference

On Wednesday 1 February, Universities UK hosted an online conference on degree apprenticeships to coincide with the publication of the 10-point plan. Rt Hon Robert Halfon MP, Minister for Skills, Apprenticeships, and Higher Education, addressed the conference.

In his address, the Minister outlined the successes of degree apprenticeships, citing their recent growth, the opportunities they offer to individuals who wouldn’t conventionally attend university, and the benefits of “earning while you learn”.

Robert Halfon also discussed the importance of championing quality to ensure technical education gains parity of esteem with traditional degrees. He raised the regulatory burden worries of those working in the sector and said he wanted to “continue that conversation”.

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

Public attitudes to Higher Education report

On Thursday 2 February, the UPP Foundation and Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) published its report on public attitudes to Higher Education. The report focuses on the value of university education, the impact of the cost-of-living crisis, and views towards freedom of speech. It is the second in a series of annual polling on this issue, following the inaugural findings last year.

Key findings include:

- Value of university education:
 - o 57% agree that universities are important to the UK economy
 - o 50% agree that university research should receive funding from the taxpayer

- 22% agree with the statement “a university degree is a waste of time”
- Cost of living:
 - 64% support reintroduction of maintenance grants for poorest students – but support for prioritising students for additional financial support is low.
 - 63% believe that ‘students should expect to work part time to cover their living costs while at university.’
 - 57% agree that the Government should provide additional support to students
- Free speech:
 - 57% describe freedom of speech as under at least some threat

Responding to the findings, Nick Hillman, Director of HEPI, said: “A sustained advocacy job will need to be done either side of the next general election if more people are to understand the true value of higher education.”

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

Higher Education research and innovation in facts and figures

On Friday 3 February, Universities UK published a report underlining the central role of university research and innovation in delivering government ambitions on growth.

The report found that:

- UK universities produce world-leading research
- Research and innovation activity is well distributed across the UK, playing a vital role in the government’s levelling up agenda.
- Investment in research and innovation delivers high returns on investment and creates economic benefit
- University research helps businesses and other organisations solve problems

Commenting on the report, Vivienne Stern MBE, CEO of Universities UK, said: “The UK higher education sector’s exceptional capability in research and innovation is a



genuine national asset, for which the UK is famous around the world. It happens all over the UK, and in universities of many different types – from big universities with broad subject areas to small, specialist institutions.”

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