



The All-Party Parliamentary **University Group**

31 January – 4 February 2022

University APPG weekly update

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

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Parliamentary Business

Education oral questions

On Monday 31 January Minister at the Department for Education took questions on the floor of the House, including several on matters relating to higher education. Education Secretary Rt Hon Nadhim Zahawi did not participate as he was isolating with Covid-19. Conservative MP Danny Kruger asked about low value university courses and praised his local further education college for its role getting people into high quality jobs. Minister Michelle Donelan stressed the government's commitment to ensuring value for money in the higher education system and referred to the Office for Students' minimum standards. She was critical of Shadow Universities Minister Matt Western's suggestion that imposing fines and universal thresholds would punish universities with high numbers of disadvantaged, black and ethnic minority or mature students, referring to it as 'dumbing down'.

In response to a question from Conservative MP Siobhan Bailie on the use of NDAs in sexual harassment cases, Minister Donelan referred to having worked with Universities UK and campaign group Can't Buy My Silence to launch the recent pledge and encouraged all vice-chancellors to sign up. In answer to later questions from Conservative MPs Greg Smith and Jonathan Gullis on freedom of speech, the Minister highlighted the Freedom of Speech (Higher Education) Bill but gave no timescale for its return to the Commons.

SNP MPs Marion Fellows and Patricia Gibson asked about the fairness of the English student loans system, stating that soon graduates earning just over £27,000 per year would effectively pay a marginal tax rate of 42.25%. Minister Donelan said the maximum rate of tuition fees had been frozen for five years and that only a quarter of graduates now fully repaid their loans. She said the full Augar response would be published 'in due course'.

Conservative MP Sir David Evennett gave his view that students should be able to claim a refund if they are not able to attend in-person lectures now Covid restrictions have been lifted. Minister Donelan stated that although online learning can be used to enhance learning, it should not be used as a cost cutting exercise and that she was personally calling universities that have been the subject of concerns.

Questions were also asked on Horizon Europe association, support for Chevening scholars from Afghanistan and funding for BTEC qualifications.

You can read a transcript of the session [here](#) or watch it back [here](#).

ARIA Bill – Consideration of Lords Amendments

On Monday 31 January, the Advanced Research and Invention Agency (ARIA) Bill returned to the House of Commons for members to consider amendments made in the Lords. All amendments passed apart from the Lords Amendment 1, which dealt with the conditions that ARIA may attach to its financial support. The Science, Research and Innovation Minister, George Freeman MP said that the amendment, as drafted, would not actually prevent ARIA from doing anything. He said that legally the amendment simply represented a drafting change and as such the Government could not accept it.

The Bill will now return to the Lords for further consideration of Commons amendments on the 9 February.

You can read the amendments [here](#) and watch the debate back [here](#).

Lord's European Affairs Committee session on the UK's participation in Horizon Europe

On Tuesday 1 February 2022, the House of Lord's European Affairs Committee held a public evidence session on the UK's participation in Horizon Europe.

Head of International Engagement at Universities UK International (UUKi), Peter Mason appeared alongside Professor Kurt Deketelaere, Secretary-General of the League of European Research Universities and Professor Robin Grimes, Foreign Secretary at the Royal Society.

Baroness Couttie (Con) asked the panel how the delay in association was impacting science and research. In response, Peter Mason outlined the impact on institutional research budgets, highlighting reports from UUKi members that EU universities were having doubts about including UK universities in projects. Professor Grimes suggested that uncertainty had caused an erosion of confidence and urgent communications were needed to allay these fears. Professor Deketelaere added that it was the responsibility of EU universities to continue to set up joint projects, and relay messages of confidence, but highlighted that the longer the delay went on, the more of a challenge this would pose.

Responding to a question on the government's recent guarantee to match funding, Peter Mason welcomed this step but highlighted that it is limited to only the first set of calls and that the sector would welcome expansion of this. Professor Deketelaere cited feedback from his UK and EU members suggesting that details of this guarantee were still unclear. Professor Grimes echoed previous points and added that the ultimate guarantee would be to 'swiftly associate to Horizon'.

Lord Faulkes (Lab) asked the panel about the causes of the delay, in response Peter Mason highlighted the political aspects of the implementation of Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) as well as disagreement over the Northern Ireland protocol. He added that this was seemingly part of a broader trend, with the EU Commission treating science and research as 'tool of negotiation'. Professor Deketelaere agreed, suggesting that research was being used as a 'bargaining chip' on both sides of the channel. He also highlighted that the same was happening for his Swiss members.

All three panellists highlighted the need to de-politicise the process and stated their support for the upcoming campaign #SticktoScience which aims to address politicisation of the process. Professor Grimes added that although science could be useful for diplomacy, if it continued to be a political issue, there would be 'only losers'.

Responding to a question on alternative options from Lord Tugendhat (Con), Peter Mason reiterated that the scope of alternatives was limited compared to what Horizon currently provides and members were most concerned about a stable and increasing pot of money. He then outlined several short-term and longer-term measures that the government could take to ensure that the UK government met its goal of becoming a 'science superpower'. Professor Grimes said it was understandable to plan for options, and that this must include evidence of benefits of association and what any replacement would be trying to replicate. Professor Deketelaere also highlighted that the Swiss government had attempted to operate outside Horizon and are now lobbying to get back in due to reduction in collaboration and talent.

The discussion also covered political engagement that the panellists had taken on Horizon participation, what the other pressing priorities for the panellists are as well as opportunities and limits of alternative global programmes.

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

Science and Technology Committee - Reproducibility and research integrity

On Wednesday 2 February, the Science and Technology Committee held an oral evidence session as part of its inquiry on 'reproducibility and research integrity'.

The Committee heard evidence from the Science, Research and Innovation Minister, George Freeman MP, UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Chief Executive Ottoline Leyser, and James Parry, Chief Executive of the UK Research Integrity Office.

During the session, George Freeman MP reaffirmed the government's position for the UK to seek association with Horizon Europe but highlighted that a 'Science and Discovery' plan was being formed if association was not possible. He also discussed the levelling up agenda and how science and innovation needed to be at the centre of the UK's economic strategy.

Ottoline Leyser suggested that researchers felt that narrow criteria for career progression was encouraging a focus on specific research outputs, and made reproducibility more challenging.

A transcript of the session will be available [here](#) and you can watch the oral evidence session back [here](#).

Backbench Business debate on the Effectiveness of the Government's Education Catch-Up and Mental Health Recovery Programmes

On Thursday 3 February, there was a backbench business debate on the effectiveness of the Government's Education Catch-Up and Mental Health Recovery Programmes. The debate was tabled by Education Committee Chair Robert Halfon MP (Con).

Robert Halfon MP used the debate to outline his concerns about school-catch up and what he termed "ghost children" who were not attending school after the pandemic. He also discussed the impact of the pandemic on young people's mental health as well as criticising the rollout of the National Tutoring Service. In response, the Minister for School Standards, Robin Walker MP, said the government were supporting schools to prioritise attendance and providing extra teaching where needed, to ensure that pupils stay on track with their wider learning and development, but recognised there was still progress to be made on both catchup and mental health.

Former Shadow Education Secretary, Kate Green MP spoke about university mental health and wellbeing services, highlighting that many were supporting a higher volume of students, often with more complex needs, as a result of the pandemic. She called for further detail to be set about a new approach to mental health services for 18 to 25-year-olds as set out in the NHS long-term plan, to address these issues. The minister did not directly respond but said that the government were expanding and transforming mental health services through the NHS long-term plan and that this would support 345,000 more children and young people to access NHS funded mental health support.

You can read the transcript [here](#) watch the debate back [here](#).

Forthcoming business

Education Committee oral evidence session on Mental health and wellbeing

On Tuesday 8 February at 10am, the House of Commons Education Committee will hold an oral evidence session on children and young peoples' mental health and wellbeing.

Witnesses include:

- Lord Gus O'Donnell, former Cabinet Secretary Chair of the Legatum Institute's 2014 Commission on Wellbeing and Policy
- Catherine Roche, Chief Executive Officer at Place2Be
- Mouhssin Ismail, Principal at Newham Collegiate Sixth Form Centre, London

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

Lords oral question on mathematical sciences

On Tuesday 8 February at 2:30pm - Lord Davies of Brixton (Lab) will ask the government what plans they have to ensure that the UK remains a world leader in the mathematical sciences.

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

ARIA Bill - Consideration of Commons Amendments

On Wednesday 9 February at 11am, the Advanced Research and Invention Agency Bill (ARIA) will return to the House of Lords for consideration of amendments made in the House of Commons.

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

Written Questions

Student Unions: Finance

Emma Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department plans to publish an updated impact assessment including the impact of the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill on students' union finances ahead of the Report Stage of that Bill. [114912]

Michelle Donelan: The government will publish an updated impact assessment for the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill to reflect changes made to the bill during its passage ahead of introduction in the House of Lords.

Student Loans Company: ICT

Rebecca Long Bailey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the Student Loan Company's eQuote portal for securing student support services and technology from assistive technology service providers, what timescale is planned for the rollout of the tender procurement process that will replace the current interim eQuote portal. [112590]

Michelle Donelan: The e-quote system has been introduced as an interim measure to increase transparency of pricing and provide the department and the Student Loans Company (SLC) with improved access to data and information on the costs and supply of assistive technology. This is particularly important considering the concerns made public by the Competition and Markets Authority last year in relation to allegations of price-fixing of supplies to disabled students.

There are a number of quality measures in place for the equipment and associated services procured through SLC 's e-quote portal. All equipment procured through the e-quote portal must meet the relevant specification set by SLC and the department. The department has also set out its expectations for the standards that assistive technology service providers should meet in a guidance document published here: <https://www.practitioners.slc.co.uk/exchange-blog/2021/march/02032021-guidance-for-assistive-technology-service-providers-atsps/>

In addition to this, SLC conducts a regular student satisfaction survey to identify any issues that students may experience so that they can be addressed.

On the question of factors other than price, it is an essential criterion that the package of support quoted for meets the student's needs and the relevant specification. Quotes are sourced only from suppliers who are registered with the department and are therefore required to comply with the standards referenced above. The system selects the most cost-effective solution once these requirements have been met, in line with SLC 's responsibilities for securing value for money for Disabled Students' Allowance expenditure.

On the question of the timeframe for the procurement, SLC is due to publish a Prior Information Notice on 4 February 2022 which will set out further details.

Rebecca Long Bailey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the performance of the Student Loan Company's eQuote portal in (a) securing high quality student support services and technology from assistive technology service providers, (b) evaluating the extent that the quality of services both achieves and exceeds the minimum standards required to be allowed to bid and (c) adequately weighting the incorporation of factors aside from price in terms of the contracts recommended through the portal to customers. [112589]

Michelle Donelan: The e-quote system has been introduced as an interim measure to increase transparency of pricing and provide the department and the Student Loans Company (SLC) with improved access to data and information on the costs and supply of assistive technology. This is particularly important considering the concerns made public by the Competition and Markets Authority last year in relation to allegations of price-fixing of supplies to disabled students.

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Higher Education: Overseas Students

Dan Jarvis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what guidance his Department provides to Afghan nationals relocated under the (a) Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy and (b) Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme on applying for higher education in the UK. [114751]

Michelle Donelan: From 1 August 2022, people who have been granted leave under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) or under the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS), will qualify for student support and home fee status in relation to new higher education (HE) courses, if they have been resident in the UK and Islands since the grant of such leave. They will also qualify for advanced learner loans for further education courses. Students who qualify for leave on this basis will not need to demonstrate three years ordinary residence in the UK and Islands before the start of their course.

Guidance for Afghan nationals applying for HE courses can be found at the following links:

- <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/welcome-a-guide-for-arrivals-to-the-uk-from-afghanistan-on-the-locally-employed-staff-relocation-scheme>
- <https://www.gov.uk/student-finance/who-qualifies>

This guidance is being updated to reflect the recent changes to HE student support for persons with leave under ARAP and ACRS.

Overseas Students: Loans

Dan Jarvis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether Afghan nationals with Indefinite Leave to Remain relocated under the (a) Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy and (b) Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme are eligible for student loans. [114750]

Michelle Donelan: From 1 August 2022, people who have been granted leave under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) or under the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS), will qualify for student support and home fee status in relation to new higher education (HE) courses, if they have been resident in the UK and Islands since the grant of such leave. They will also qualify for advanced learner loans for further education courses. Students who qualify for leave on this basis will not need to demonstrate three years ordinary residence in the UK and Islands before the start of their course.

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- <https://www.gov.uk/student-finance/who-qualifies>

This guidance is being updated to reflect the recent changes to HE student support for persons with leave under ARAP and ACRS.

Higher Education: Fees and Charges

Dan Jarvis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether Afghan nationals with regularised Indefinite Leave to Remain relocated under the (a) Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (b) Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme will pay (i) home fees or (ii) overseas fees in higher education in the UK. [114749]

Michelle Donelan: From 1 August 2022, people who have been granted leave under the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) or under the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS), will qualify for student support and home fee status in relation to new higher education (HE) courses, if they have been resident in the UK and Islands since the grant of such leave. They will also qualify for advanced learner loans for further education courses. Students who qualify for leave on this basis will not need to demonstrate three years ordinary residence in the UK and Islands before the start of their course.

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- <https://www.gov.uk/student-finance/who-qualifies>

This guidance is being updated to reflect the recent changes to HE student support for persons with leave under ARAP and ACRS.

Slovenia: Overseas Students

Lord German: To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the value to the UK of developing relationships with Slovenian citizens currently living in Slovenia, who have undertaken courses in universities in the UK.

Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park: The UK is proud to be celebrating 30 years of diplomatic relations with Slovenia in 2022. Our relationship is strong, and is reinforced by the close and enduring friendship and cooperation facilitated through educational exchange. We welcome the launch last year of the UK- Slovenia alumni network and support its goal to deepen and consolidate our educational ties.

Refugees: Afghanistan

Dan Jarvis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of applying the residence test rules of those with Calais leave to Afghan nationals relocated under the (a) Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy and (b) Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme wanting to study in higher education. [114752]

Victoria Atkins: The Department for Education have confirmed that ACRS/ARAP individuals wishing to access higher education will have access to home fee status and student support from the next academic year.

This puts ACRS and ARAP arrivals on the same footing as refugees.

Research: Investment

Chi Onwurah: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much private R&D investment is estimated to be crowded in for each pound of public R&D spend; how that estimate is calculated; and whether that is dependent on (a) geography and (b) sector.

George Freeman: BEIS published "The relationship between public and private R&D funding" (BEIS Research Paper Number 2020/010) on 1 July 2020 at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-and-development-relationship-between-public-and-private-funding> carried out by Oxford Economics Ltd

They estimated the monetary impact of the long-run leverage rate, suggesting that each £1 of public R&D eventually stimulates between £1.96 and £2.34 of private R&D.

The study drew on OECD data for 41 countries from 1961 to 2017 with varying degrees of completeness.

Chi Onwurah: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what assessment he has made of (a) the proportion of private sector investment which is outside of the Golden Triangle of Oxford, Cambridge and London and (b) how that has increased or decreased over the last decade. [113100]

George Freeman: Business expenditure on R&D (BERD) demonstrates the amount of R&D performed by UK businesses, and is the nearest for private sector investment. In 2020, the regions of Greater London, the East of England, and South East of England accounted for 55% of total UK BERD. Since 2010, BERD outside these regions has ranged from 45% - 49%, peaking at 49% in 2016.

The Levelling Up White Paper sets out how we will maximise the contribution of innovation to levelling up. This includes a new goal that domestic public investment in R&D outside the Greater South East will increase by at least one third over the Spending Review period and at least 40 percent by 2030, with that additional government funding seeking to leverage at least twice as much private sector investment over the long term to stimulate innovation and productivity growth.

BEIS has published a R&D spatial data tool (<https://bit.ly/3gkFQyk>) which allows users to access, visualise and compare indicators that show the scale of R&D systems at a subregional level over time. This includes metrics that proxy for private R&D and innovation and can be reviewed for all UK regions.

Research: Finance

Chi Onwurah: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he plans to take to increase the proportion of public and private UK research and development spend outside the Golden Triangle of Oxford, Cambridge and London. [113099]

George Freeman: Making the most of R&D in places around the UK is a key government priority. The 2021 Spending Review sees record levels of investment in the UK's world-leading research base with public spending on Research & Development (R&D) increasing by £5 billion per annum to £20 billion in 2024-25. The substantial uplift to research and science funding will not only allow the UK to build on our core strengths but will also provide opportunities to grow research and innovation investment across the entire country. Further details of how this funding will be allocated will be announced in due course.

The Levelling Up White Paper sets out how we will maximise the contribution of innovation to levelling up. This includes a new mission that, by 2030, domestic public investment in R&D outside the Greater South East will increase by at least one third over the Spending Review period and at least 40 percent by 2030, with that additional government funding seeking to leverage at least twice as much private sector investment over the long term to stimulate innovation and productivity growth.

In support of this, BEIS has committed to invest at least 55% of its domestic R&D funding outside the Greater South East by 2024/25.

Innovation: Finance

Chi Onwurah: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what discussions he has had with local authorities and regional mayors on the devolution of innovation funding or other forms of innovation deals. [113098]

George Freeman: The Levelling Up White Paper sets out how we will maximise the contribution of innovation to levelling up by building on existing and emerging strengths across the country.

We are committed to taking a place-based approach – tailoring support to the research, development and innovation strengths of different places and developing policies in partnership with local government, businesses and R&D institutions.

New Innovation Accelerator pilots will support three places in the UK with world class research strengths to grow their local innovation clusters by attracting industrial R&D, creating new career opportunities and creating a more vibrant innovation ecosystem in the wider region. In addition to receiving bespoke support from the UK Government, a total of £100m R&D funding will be available to these places for projects between 2022/23 and 2024/25. Should these pilots prove successful, we will consider how to build on this approach in future.

The policies in the Levelling Up White Paper have been informed by views from across the UK - including our R&D Place Advisory Group, which includes Local Enterprise Partnership, and Mayoral Combined Authority bodies - to understand how we can build on our excellence in research and innovation so that more people and places benefit.

Innovation

Chi Onwurah: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, with which (a) local authorities and (b) devolved administrations his Department has discussed Innovation Deals. [114738]

George Freeman: The Levelling Up White Paper sets out how we will maximise the contribution of innovation to levelling up by building on existing and emerging strengths across the country.

We are committed to taking a place-based approach – tailoring support to the research, development and innovation strengths of different places and developing policies in partnership with local government, businesses and R&D institutions.

New Innovation Accelerator pilots will support three places in the UK to become major, globally competitive centres for research and innovation. In addition to receiving bespoke support from the UK Government, a total of £100m R&D funding will be available to these places for projects between 2022/23 and 2024/25. Should these pilots prove successful, we will consider how to build on this approach in future.

The policies in the Levelling Up White Paper have been informed by views from across the UK - including our R&D Place Advisory Group, which includes Local Enterprise Partnership, and the Devolved Administrations - to understand how we can build on our excellence in research and innovation so that more people and places benefit.

Meningitis: Vaccination

Matt Western: To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what plans he has to increase the meningitis -B vaccine uptake amongst the student population.

Maria Caulfield: As Meningococcal B disease is rare after the first five years of life, students are not routinely offered this vaccination . Protection against other strains which cause meningitis and septicaemia is provided through the national Men-ACWY programme delivered at ages 13 to 15 years old or in catch-up programmes at ages 19 to 25 years old.

Students: Meningitis

Matt Western: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of rising numbers of meningitis -B cases amongst the student population. [110513]

Michelle Donelan: It has been a priority of this government to keep students in Higher Education as safe as possible during the COVID-19 outbreak and we have worked closely with the Department of Health and Social Care during this time. This continues as students return to the full programme of face-to-face teaching and learning that they received before the COVID-19 outbreak.

The government is aware of the risks of communicable diseases in settings such as Higher Education, where large numbers of people mix closely in confined environments. The United Kingdom Health Security Agency has published a toolkit for Higher Education providers on vaccine preventable infectious diseases: <https://khub.net/documents/135939561/174090192/MMR+MenACWY+and+coronavirus+vaccine+comms+toolkit+for+universities.pdf/6ec4e100-242b-4f5c-f1ea-bf88cace1ecb>

This toolkit includes advice and links to free resources for providers to use with their students in order to protect their health and wellbeing, and it encourages students to be vaccinated against a range of infectious diseases, including meningitis, measles, mumps and COVID-19.

Matt Western: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on the rising number of meningitis -B cases amongst the student population. [110514]

Michelle Donelan: It has been a priority of this government to keep students in Higher Education as safe as possible during the COVID-19 outbreak and we have worked closely with the Department of Health and Social Care during this time. This continues as students return to the full programme of face-to-face teaching and learning that they received before the COVID-19 outbreak.

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This toolkit includes advice and links to free resources for providers to use with their students in order to protect their health and wellbeing, and it encourages students to be vaccinated against a range of infectious diseases, including meningitis, measles, mumps and COVID-19.

Office for Students: Finance

Matt Western: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what the percentage increase is of funding from his Department to the Office for Students in the financial year 2021-22 compared to 2020-21. [110522]

Michelle Donelan: The total Strategic Priorities Grant available to the Office for Students for distribution was £1,433 million in financial year 2021-22, an £11 million (0.8%) increase compared to the previous year. This excludes funding that is distributed by Research England, and one-off capital and non-capital grants for COVID-19.

For the last academic year, the Department for Education also provided an additional £85 million to the Office for Students to distribute to higher education providers for supporting students in hardship.

Matt Western: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the financial viability of the Office for Students. [110521]

Michelle Donelan: The department regularly assesses the Office for Students' funding to ensure that it is able to effectively resource and deliver strategic priorities across the higher education sector. The Office for Students is also required to publish its audited annual report and accounts which includes its financial statements.

Higher Education: Finance

Matt Western: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what contingency plans he has in place in the event that a higher education provider should financially fail.[110520]

Michelle Donelan: The Office for Students (OfS) is the independent regulator of higher education in England. The OfS monitors the financial viability and sustainability of providers registered with them and their primary contingency against the impact on students in the event that a higher education provider should financially fail is the Student Protection Plan which must be agreed with OfS by each provider.

From 1 April 2021 the OfS introduced a new registration condition (Condition C4) that requires compliance with student protection directions issued by the OfS where the OfS reasonably considers that there is a material risk the provider will exit the English higher education market or cease trading or delivering higher education.

In the event of institutional financial failure leading to market exit, the department would assist the OfS in collaborating cross-government action on the wider consequences, to mitigate the impacts on those employed directly and indirectly by the provider, the local economy, research, innovation and knowledge exchange.

The OfS report dated December 2021 shows that despite the many operational and financial challenges arising from the COVID-19 outbreak, the overall financial position of universities, colleges and other providers registered with the OfS across the higher education sector has remained sound over the course of the last year, with generally reasonable financial resilience.

Providers were able to manage COVID-19 impacts better than originally expected, with student numbers holding up, and through careful management of cash and costs. Government support measures have served to help universities navigate those challenges.

Department for Education officials work closely with the OfS who continuously monitor provider financial sustainability, engaging more closely with those where it considers there to be increased

financial risk. It is important to note that universities are autonomous businesses and continue to remain responsible for the decisions they make in regard to their business model and sustainability.

Students: Social Class

Matt Western: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the impact of socio-economic background on the drop-out rate of first-year undergraduate students. [110517]

Michelle Donelan: The Office for Students (OfS) publishes statistics across different aspects of the student lifecycle to help inform regulatory processes. The OfS Access and Participation dashboard shows how students from disadvantaged backgrounds perform across the following indicators:

- Continuation: the percentage of first year students who continue their studies after 12 months (full-time students) or 24 months (part-time students).
- Attainment: the percentage of students who graduated with first or upper second-class degrees.
- Progression: the percentage of students progressing to highly skilled employment or higher-level study.

Measures of disadvantage include Index of Multiple Deprivation and Participation of Local Areas, which are based on the neighbourhood that students lived in before starting their course. More information about these terms, as well as a user guide for the dashboard can be found here:

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/dashboard-user-guide/key-terms/>

Graduates: Social Class

Matt Western: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the impact of socio-economic background on the graduation rate of undergraduate students. [110518]

Michelle Donelan: The Office for Students (OfS) publishes statistics across different aspects of the student lifecycle to help inform regulatory processes. The OfS Access and Participation dashboard shows how students from disadvantaged backgrounds perform across the following indicators:

- Continuation: the percentage of first year students who continue their studies after 12 months (full-time students) or 24 months (part-time students).
- Attainment: the percentage of students who graduated with first or upper second-class degrees.
- Progression: the percentage of students progressing to highly skilled employment or higher-level study.

Measures of disadvantage include Index of Multiple Deprivation and Participation of Local Areas, which are based on the neighbourhood that students lived in before starting their course. More information about these terms, as well as a user guide for the dashboard can be found

here: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/dashboard-user-guide/key-terms/>

Matt Western: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the impact of socio-economic background on the employment rate of recent undergraduate graduates. [110519]

Michelle Donelan: The Office for Students (OfS) publishes statistics across different aspects of the student lifecycle to help inform regulatory processes. The OfS Access and Participation dashboard shows how students from disadvantaged backgrounds perform across the following indicators:

- Continuation: the percentage of first year students who continue their studies after 12 months (full-time students) or 24 months (part-time students).
- Attainment: the percentage of students who graduated with first or upper second-class degrees.
- Progression: the percentage of students progressing to highly skilled employment or higher-level study.

Measures of disadvantage include Index of Multiple Deprivation and Participation of Local Areas, which are based on the neighbourhood that students lived in before starting their course. More information about these terms, as well as a user guide for the dashboard can be found here: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/dashboard-user-guide/key-terms/>

Education: Standards

Matt Western: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what meetings he has had with the Office for Students ahead of the publication of their consultation on the new student outcomes approach. [110515]

Michelle Donelan: The department meets regularly with the Office for Students (OfS) and the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education.

The OfS published consultations on improving the quality of higher education (HE) in England on 20 January. These set out the numerical thresholds which will underpin minimum acceptable student outcomes and how high quality provision will be recognised through the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF).

Our HE sector is world class but there are too many pockets of poor quality that let students down, particularly those from disadvantaged and underrepresented backgrounds. In line with the government's manifesto commitment and building upon our announcement last year to refocus universities' access and participation plans on real social mobility, we are taking serious steps, with the OfS, to drive up the quality of HE across the sector and to tackle the unacceptable pockets of poor quality provision which do not offer value for money for the taxpayer or our students.

Universities and colleges not meeting these minimum expectations will face investigation and consideration of whether they are in breach of their registration conditions, which could lead to sanctions, including fines and reduced access to student finance. These minimum levels are just one factor the OfS will consider. As is currently the case, and as described in the consultation document, the OfS will continue to consider a provider's wider context, including its student characteristics, before making any final decisions on compliance with registration conditions.

This government believes that every student, regardless of background, deserves quality and transparency from their university or provider about their course. These measures are about tackling low quality, and, through the TEF, rewarding high quality, and ensuring transparency which, overall, will maintain confidence in the HE sector.

Matt Western: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what meetings he has had with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education ahead of the publication of the Office for Students' consultation on the new student outcomes approach. [110516]

Michelle Donelan: The department meets regularly with the Office for Students (OfS) and the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education.

The OfS published consultations on improving the quality of higher education (HE) in England on 20 January. These set out the numerical thresholds which will underpin minimum acceptable student outcomes and how high quality provision will be recognised through the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF).

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This government believes that every student, regardless of background, deserves quality and transparency from their university or provider about their course. These measures are about tackling low quality, and, through the TEF, rewarding high quality, and ensuring transparency which, overall, will maintain confidence in the HE sector.

Universities: Freedom of Expression

Dr Kieran Mullan: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department is taking to protect freedom of speech on university campuses. [111761]

Michelle Donelan: The government believes that freedom of speech and academic freedom are fundamental pillars of our higher education system, and that protecting these principles should be a priority for universities.

That is why we have introduced the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill, which passed its 2nd reading in the House of Commons on 12 July 2021 and was debated by the Public Bill Committee in September 2021. The Bill will strengthen existing freedom of speech duties and directly address gaps within the existing law. This includes the fact there is no clear way of enforcing the current law when a higher education provider breaches it as well as applying the duties directly to students' unions and constituent colleges. The changes will introduce clear consequences for breaches of the new duties and ensure that these principles are upheld.

Chevening Scholarships Programme

Caroline Lucas: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what estimate she has made of when Chevening Scholars who arrived in the UK via Operation Pitting on six-month visas which expire in February 2022 will receive documentation to confirm their indefinite leave to remain status in the UK; and if she will make a statement. [111541]

Victoria Atkins: In recognition of the urgency of the evacuation and the need to act quickly, the majority of those who entered the UK during the evacuation phase were granted limited leave to enter, usually for 6 months, with access to public funds and employment. This status is not a bar to them being permanently housed or to starting their life in the UK, including taking employment.

Our aim is to conclude the process of confirmation of Indefinite Leave to Remain status before anyone's leave expires.

Universities: Fees and Charges

Layla Moran: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate he has made of the number of British children born before the UK's departure from the EU and currently living in an EU country who will no longer be eligible for home fee status in the event that they apply to study at universities in the UK on courses beginning after 1 January 2028. [111691]

Michelle Donelan: UK Nationals living in the European Economic Area (EEA) or Switzerland at the end of the transition period, and who wish to study in England, will continue to be eligible for home fee status for courses starting before 1 January 2028. This 7 year offer supports children of UK nationals currently progressing through secondary school.

The department does not hold the number of British children living in the EEA or Switzerland at the end of the transition period who are under secondary school age. The department's published Equality Analysis of the Education (Student Fees, Awards and Support) (Amendment) Regulations 2021 shows that in the academic year 2018/19, there were 4,795 EEA (excluding Ireland) and Swiss domiciled students with UK nationality studying at English higher education providers. They represent 0.2% of the 1,942,535 students studying at English providers in 2018/19. Further information is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-student-finance-2021-to-2022-equality-analysis>

Higher Education: Hong Kong

Sir Iain Duncan Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether his Department has made representations to universities in the UK that have (a) awarded honorary doctorates and (b) otherwise honoured members of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region government in the context of its role in the Government-acknowledged ongoing breach of the Sino-British Declaration in Hong Kong. [110230]

Michelle Donelan: The department has not made representations to universities in the UK in the context as described. It is for universities as autonomous institutions to make their own judgement calls, in line with our laws. We continue to recommend that university due diligence processes, including regarding appointments, should consider reputational, ethical and security risks.

Higher Education: Research

Colleen Fletcher: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, how much Government research funding was provided to each higher education institution in (a) Coventry, (b) the West Midlands and (c) England in each of the last three years. [111604]

George Freeman: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) research income data shows research income earned by individual Higher Education providers, including grant and contract income from

different government sources including Higher Education Funding bodies (including Research England), UK Research and Innovation Research Councils and Government departments. The relevant information is available on HESA at <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/finances/income>

Research: Private Sector

Chi Onwurah: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps his Department is taking to help encourage more private, self-funded research and development. [110349]

George Freeman: We are implementing the Innovation Strategy, which sets out the Government's vision to make the UK a global hub for innovation by 2035. It aims to boost private sector investment across the whole of the UK, which is critical to achieve our target of 2.4% of GDP being invested in R&D by 2027.

Through the Strategy, we have committed to take action in areas such as regulation and public procurement, creating the conditions for all businesses to innovate. However, this is just the starting point, and over the coming months and years we will continue to build an enabling environment for private sector investment in R&D.

Following the Spending Review, we are also ensuring that government funding attracts private – including from overseas – investment. For example, we have increased funding for core Innovate UK programmes, reaching c.£1bn per year by 2024/25, which are highly successful in securing private sector leverage.

Chi Onwurah: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, pursuant to the Answer of 27 January to Question 110349, what proportion of private sector leverage is considered highly successful; and what proportion of Innovate UK programmes achieve that. [113734]

George Freeman: The level of private investment generated varies by sector (including maturity), stage of research and type of R&D funding programme. It can therefore vary considerably across programmes.

For Innovate UK programmes, Innovate UK has invested £4 billion of grant funding and generated £2.3 billion of direct matched funding from businesses, since 01/01/2012. On top of this, evaluations show net additional follow-on private investment of between £1-£5 within 1-4 years of receiving a grant.

Across Innovate UK 's core programmes, validated programme evaluations demonstrate a return to the economy of approximately of up to £7 for every £1, as well as spill-over impacts estimated to be 2 to 3 times larger.

Sector News

Government publishes Levelling Up White Paper

On Wednesday 2 February, the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Rt Hon Michael Gove MP announced the publication of the government's flagship policy agenda – the Levelling Up White Paper in parliament.

The 'Levelling up the United Kingdom' White Paper promises to increase opportunity and growth in left behind areas, and narrow gaps with the more affluent places of the UK. Although universities do not feature heavily in the paper's proposals, there is a recognition of the role of universities as civic and economic anchors in many of the areas highlighted.

On Research and Development funding (R&D), it sets out two key targets, firstly, increasing domestic public R&D investment outside the Greater South East by at least 40% by 2030 and at least one third by 2024/25; and secondly, BEIS to invest at least 55% of its R&D funding outside the Greater South East by 2024/25.

On innovation, it sets out that BEIS will invest £100m to pilot three new 'Innovation Accelerators', in Greater Manchester, the West Midlands, and the Glasgow City-Region as well as £200 million over the next three years for 12 projects across the UK through the ongoing Strength in Places Fund programme. The White Paper also proposes further private sector-led partnerships across the UK, especially around existing or potential new 'clusters' of business activity.

The White Paper reconfirmed the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) allocations set out in the Comprehensive Spending Review. There are no direct references to the UKSPF being allocated to R&D or innovation projects with universities, however, there could be some flexibility to support innovation.

County devolution deals in nine new areas are being proposed, which would cover Durham, York and Nottingham universities. The government will also negotiate trailblazer further devolution deals with the West Midlands and Greater Manchester, and other combined authorities.

The White Paper also contains a reference to planned changes to the Office for Students (OfS) access and participation regime and how this will promote social mobility, particularly through partnerships between universities and schools to raise attainment.

You can read the White Paper [here](#) and the press release [here](#).

OfS appoints Susan Lapworth as interim Chief Executive

On Wednesday 2 February, the Secretary of State for Education, Nadhim Zahawi MP confirmed the appointment of Susan Lapworth as interim Chief Executive of the Office for Students (OfS).

She is currently Director of Regulation at the OfS and will take up the role from 1 May until the end of 2022, ahead of recruitment for a permanent Chief Executive.

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

Government appoints ARIA's first Chief Executive

On Tuesday 1 February, the BEIS Secretary, Kwasi Kwarteng MP announced that Peter Highnam had been appointed as the first Chief Executive of the Advanced Research and Invention Agency (ARIA). Dr Highnam is currently the Deputy Director of the US Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), which has been cited as the major inspiration for ARIA.

Dr Highnam will take up his role on 3 May 2022 for a five-year fixed term. The BEIS Secretary also announced that the focus would now turn to appointing a Chair to support Dr Highnam as ARIA starts its rollout.

You can find the announcement [here](#).