



# All-Party Parliamentary University Group

## Weekly update

6 – 10 January 2025

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

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# Parliamentary business

## **National Insurance Contributions (Secondary Class 1 Contributions) Bill – HoL second reading**

On Monday 6 January, the National Insurance Contributions (Secondary Class 1 Contributions) Bill had its second reading in the House of Lords.

Baroness Kramer (Liberal Democrat) put forward a motion to regret due to the pressures the rise in employers' contributions will place on institutions. She highlighted that universities are already in a dire financial situation and the national insurance rise will add to their difficulties.

Lord Sharkey (Liberal Democrat) highlighted the value of universities in their international reputation, research outputs and regional benefits. He pointed out that, although the Education Secretary has spoken positively of universities, the impact of raising employer national insurance contributions is more expensive than the money raised by increasing tuition fees, and universities are also contending with the impacts of falling student numbers on their finances. He said the Government had “significantly worsened their already extreme financial difficulties” by not planning for universities and expressed his strong support of the regret amendment.

The motion to regret did not pass.

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

## **Science visa policy – HoL SIT Committee oral evidence**

On Tuesday 7 January, the House of Lords Science, Innovation and Technology Committee heard evidence on science visa policy from the following witnesses as part of a non-inquiry session:

- Professor Dame Karen Holford, Vice-Chancellor and Universities UK Board Member at Cranfield University
- Shuyeb Muquit, UK Government Affairs Strategy Lead at Fragomen LLP
- Harry Anderson, Deputy Director at Universities UK International
- Professor Alison Noble, Foreign Secretary at The Royal Society

Witnesses raised concerns about the previous government's decision to scrap dependent visas and the impact that has had on the science talent pipeline in the UK, noting there has been a drop in international postgraduate students numbers this year. They noted the lack of consistency around immigration policy in recent years has also had a deterrent effect on international students considering the UK to study. To remain globally competitive, they called for greater join up and coherence between government departments, the reinstatement of dependent visas and for government to consider the burdens that upfront visa and health surcharge costs place on science talent.

You can read [a full transcript when it becomes available](#) and [watch the session](#).

## **Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill – HoL second reading**

On Tuesday 7 January, the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill had its second reading in the House of Lords.

Universities were raised during the following contributions:

**Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay (Conservative):** The Bill defines the premise operator as the freeholder or leaseholder, and the event organiser as the entity overseeing the delivery of an event. As the Society of London Theatre and UK Theatre have pointed out, a number of theatres operate within multipurpose venues, such as university complexes—Northern Stage in Newcastle is one example. The Society of London Theatre and its members can provide useful insights into these operational differences and how they might be overcome; how can we make sure that the SIA takes account of this practical, first-hand advice?

**Baroness Fox of Buckley (Non-affiliated):** I am pleased that education settings are now classified as standard duty premises regardless of capacity, although I am rather mystified that universities and higher education institutions are not included. We have already seen the way that the costs of security measures have been used as an excuse to close down debates on university campuses. The last thing we want is to turn universities into fortresses against public debate in any way.

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

## Science, Innovation and Technology – HoC oral questions

On Wednesday 8 January, the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, Rt Hon Peter Kyle MP, and his ministerial colleagues answered oral questions in the House of Commons.

There was the following exchange on the impact of employer national insurance rises on research:

**Rebecca Paul MP (Conservative):** Universities, which are at the heart of the UK's research ecosystem, face an additional £372 million in annual costs due to the rise in employer national insurance. That threatens their ability to fund cutting-edge research, recruit top talent and support early career researchers. Does he recognise the detrimental impact that will have on research in this country? Will he explore measures to ensure that our global competitiveness in science and innovation is not undermined?

**Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, Rt Hon Peter Kyle MP:** We have found ways to get new investment into universities, which we are putting on a solid financial footing. This is just the start. We always knew that we could not fix all the problems that we inherited from that last Administration in six months, but we are finding ways to take that great start forward to get new investment into universities. I reassure the House that the war on universities by that Administration has ended.

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

# Forthcoming business

## Innovation, growth and the regions – SIT Committee oral evidence

On Tuesday 14 January from 10:15am, the Science, Innovation and Technology Committee will be hearing oral evidence as part of their inquiry on innovation, growth and the regions.

Witnesses include:

- Professor Irene Tracey CBE, Vice-Chancellor at The University of Oxford
- Dr David McBeth, Vice-Principal (Enterprise & Economic Transformation) at Dundee University
- Professor Ashutosh Tiwari, Deputy Vice-President for Research and Innovation at The University of Sheffield

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

## Renters’ Rights Bill – HoC remaining stages

On Tuesday 14 January, the Renters’ Rights Bill will have its report stage and third reading in the House of Commons.

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

You can [read the House of Commons Library briefing](#).

## The Work of the Department for Education – Education Committee oral evidence

On Wednesday 15 January from 10am, the Education Committee will hear oral evidence from the Secretary of State for Education, Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson MP, and the Permanent Secretary, Susan Acland-Hood.

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



## **Employment Rights Bill – HoC committee stage**

On Tuesday 14 January and Thursday 16 January, the Employment Rights Bill will be debated at committee stage.

You can [read more](#) and watch the sessions:

- [9:25am Tuesday 14 January](#)
- [2:00pm Tuesday 14 January](#)
- [11:30am Thursday 16 January](#)
- [2:00pm Thursday 16 January](#)



# Written questions and statements

## Students: Loans

**Manuela Perteghella MP (Liberal Democrats):** To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made an assessment of the potential impact of interest rates for university student loans on (a) students and (b) their families. [UIN 19865]

**Minister for Children and Families, Janet Daby MP:** Interest rates on student loans do not affect monthly repayments made by borrowers. Regular repayments are based on a fixed percentage of earnings above the applicable repayment threshold, not on amount borrowed or the rate of interest. The income of the wider household/family is not included.

If income is below the relevant repayment threshold, or a borrower is not earning, they do not have to make any repayments. Any outstanding debt, including interest accrued, is written off after the loan term ends, or in case of death or disability, at no detriment to the borrower. The debt does not pass to the borrower's family.

An impact assessment on the current student loan plan type can be accessed at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-reform-equality-impact-assessment>.

The government is determined that the higher education funding system should deliver for our economy, universities and students. The department has taken the system under consideration and will continue to engage with stakeholders on this.

## Overseas Students: Visas

**Rupert Lowe MP (Reform UK):** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to verify that individuals that enter the country on student visas are attending their courses. [UIN 19942]

**Minister for Migration and Citizenship, Seema Malhotra MP:** Sponsoring institutions of international students are required to promptly report where sponsorship is withdrawn due to failure to enrol or attend classes in line with published duties to UKVI. Sponsors are required to submit an annual assessment where course completion and enrolment rates of their sponsored students are assessed against published metrics.

Where educational institutions fall below these metrics, the Home Office is entitled to take compliance action against the sponsoring institution. Those students who do not enrol or persistently fail to attend their courses also face their Student permission being cancelled.

In addition, UKVI has a range of other mechanisms available to ensure that institutions are meeting their sponsor duties, including through onsite compliance visits.

## **Universities: Antisemitism**

**Ben Obese-Jecty MP (Conservative):** (19872) To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking to tackle antisemitism at universities.

**Minister for Children and Families, Janet Daby MP:** This government is clear that every student, regardless of their background or religion, should be able to pursue their studies at university without fear of harassment or discrimination. As autonomous institutions, universities have robust processes in place to prevent and tackle incidents of harassment and abuse on campus.

The latest Community Security Trust (CST) report, titled 'Campus Antisemitism in Britain 2022-2024', confirms a significant increase in antisemitic incidents on university campuses over the past two academic years. Additionally, recent Home Office hate crime data indicates that Jewish communities are disproportionately targeted by hate crimes.

The department considers tackling antisemitism in education a key priority and has already taken important steps to address it. We have confirmed £7 million in funding for the Tackling Antisemitism in Education (TAE) programme and have launched a new procurement (which will close on 16 January 2025) to upskill school and college teachers and key university staff to prevent, recognise and address incidents of antisemitism.

Under the TAE programme, we have already awarded £500,000 to the University Jewish Chaplaincy (UJC) to provide welfare-based support for Jewish students who may be worried about their safety. The funds will be used by UJC to enhance their support services, which include offering counselling, organising community events, and providing a safe space for Jewish students to discuss their concerns.

We continue to liaise closely with Jewish stakeholder groups including the UJC, the Union of Jewish Students and CST to discuss and address their concerns.

## Higher Education: Disadvantaged

**Ian Byrne MP (Independent Labour):** To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of reintroducing maintenance grants on widening access to higher education. [UIN 19905]

**Minister for Children and Families, Janet Daby MP:** The department is determined that the higher education (HE) funding system should deliver for our economy, universities and students, and the government is committed to supporting the aspiration of every person who meets the requirements and wants to go to university.

The government recognises the impact that the cost of living crisis has had on students. That is why we are increasing maximum loans for living costs for the 2025/26 academic year by 3.1%, in line with the forecast rate of RPIX inflation, to ensure that the most support is targeted at students from the lowest income families. In addition, vulnerable groups of students, such as lone parents and some disabled students who are eligible for benefits, qualify for higher rates of loans for living costs.

Means-tested, non-repayable grants remain available to low-income students with children, or adults who are financially dependent on them. Students undertaking nursing, midwifery and allied health profession courses also qualify for non-repayable grant support through the NHS Learning Support Fund.

However, the department recognises that there is more to be done to support students from disadvantaged backgrounds and is determined to reverse the decline in participation rates for disadvantaged students.

The department will set out this government's longer term plan for HE reform by summer 2025.

## Research: Finance

**George Freeman MP (Conservative):** To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to paragraph 3.68 of the Autumn Budget 2024, published on 30 October 2024, HC 295, what steps he plans to take to monitor the potential impact of the £20.4 billion R&D investment on economic and R&D business growth; and how much of that funding he plans to allocate to each (a) sector and (b) research and innovation cluster. [UIN 19674]

**Minister for AI and Digital Government, Feryal Clark MP:** R&D is fundamental to achieving the government's mission of kickstarting economic growth. DSIT regularly monitors economic and R&D business growth indicators and requires monitoring and

evaluation to be undertaken as a condition of its funding. At the Autumn Budget, DSIT was allocated £13.9bn for R&D in 2025/26. The Secretary of State will announce further details of how this funding will be allocated in due course.

## **Business and Universities**

**Chi Onwurah MP (Labour):** To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to the State of the relationship report 2024, published by the National Centre for Universities and Business on 5 December 2024, what steps he is taking to increase the number of interactions between businesses and universities. [UIN 19684]

**Minister for AI and Digital Government, Feryal Clark MP:** The Government incentivises university-business interactions through funding for UKRI programmes. Higher Education Innovation Funding (HEIF), provided through Research England is the largest source of knowledge exchange funding to English universities, providing £280 million annually to support engagement with a range of partners, including businesses. HEIF includes a £20 million contribution specifically for university-business collaboration and commercialisation. Innovate UK's Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs) programme links businesses with technical experts in UK universities. Currently, around 800 businesses, 100 knowledge bases (universities and other research organisations) and over 800 graduates are involved in KTPs.

## **Students: Cost of Living**

**Lord Taylor of Warwick (Non-affiliated):** To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to support students living in London, particularly in regard to (1) high housing costs, and (2) the rising cost of living. [UIN HL3371]

**Minister for Skills, Baroness Smith of Malvern:** The government recognises the cost-of-living pressures experienced by many students, and that those pressures may be more acute for students living in London, due in particular to higher housing costs.

To help break down barriers to opportunity for young people who want to attend university, the department is increasing maximum loans for living costs for the 2025/26 academic year by 3.1%, in line with the forecast rate of inflation, so that more support is targeted at students from the lowest income families. This will give full-time undergraduate students from the lowest income homes, who are living away from home and studying in London, an additional £414 per year in support through the higher London rate of loan for living costs.

Since universities and student landlords are autonomous and independent from government, the department has no remit to intervene directly in the student housing market. However, since 2006, the Student Accommodation Codes of Practice have protected the interests of students to ensure standards are maintained and disputes are resolved promptly. The Code sets out clearly what information relating to fees and deposits should be made available to students and offers a route for students to raise complaints about accommodation providers. Information on the Codes can be found here: <https://www.thesac.org.uk/the-code>.

The most sustainable long-term method to improve housing affordability is to increase housing supply, which is why the government is committing to building 1.5 million homes this Parliament. The Renters' Rights Bill also works to strengthen tenants' rights as a whole. Stronger powers to challenge excessive rent hikes complement the practical steps taken to help renters by ending unfair bidding wars and tackling rental discrimination.

## **Students: Loans**

**Yasmin Qureshi MP (Labour):** To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of amending the lifelong loan entitlement to offer maintenance loans for remote learners. [UIN 20598]

**Minister for Children and Families, Janet Daby MP:** The Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE) will deliver a transformational change to the student finance system in England, by broadening access to high-quality, flexible education and training.

All courses and modules with in-person attendance that are eligible for LLE tuition funding will also be eligible for maintenance loans. This represents an expansion of the maintenance offer for part-time learners and those studying technical courses.

Eligibility and qualifying conditions for LLE funding will broadly mirror existing policy. As such, remote learners will continue to have access to tuition fee loan funding but be out of scope of the maintenance offer. However, it is government's intention that the existing exemptions will continue to apply, for example remote learners who qualify for maintenance support due to a disability.

Decisions on student finance have had to be taken alongside other spending priorities to ensure the system remains financially sustainable. The department has therefore decided to continue targeting living costs support at courses that require students to attend their institution.

The government, and the department, will keep this policy under review.

## Overseas Students: Finance

**Kate Osamor MP (Labour):** To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential merits of extending access to student finance to students from Hong Kong with a British National (Overseas) Visa. [UIN 20665]

**Minister for Children and Families, Janet Daby MP:** I refer my hon. Friend, the Member for Edmonton and Winchmore Hill to the answer of 29 October 2024 to Question [10190](#).

## UK Research and Innovation: Local Government

**Chi Onwurah MP (Labour):** To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to the English Devolution White Paper, published on 16 December 2024, what assessment his Department has made of the potential merits of including local universities in engagement between UKRI and Strategic Authorities. [UIN 20616]

**Minister for AI and Digital Government, Feryal Clark MP:** Universities are central to generating local economic growth. As magnets for talent and investment and anchors for clusters, they create centres of research and innovation excellence across the country. Enabling partnership working between local government, universities and businesses will be at the heart of our future regional innovation funding programme.

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## Students: Finance

**Caroline Voaden MP (Liberal Democrats):** To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether additional funding will be made available to students from England on graduate entry medicine courses under the Lifelong Learning Entitlement. [UIN 20814]

**Minister for Children and Families, Janet Daby MP:** Under the Lifelong Learning Entitlement, the government will make available an additional entitlement for priority subjects and longer courses, above an individual's core four year entitlement.

Learners will be able to access this additional entitlement to study a limited number of priority subjects, such as medicine. This will ensure that learners can always gain skills in priority areas, regardless of remaining entitlement or previous qualifications.

In 2025, the department will outline in more detail the specific courses that will be eligible for this additional entitlement.

## **UK Research and Innovation: Finance**

**Chi Onwurah MP (Labour):** To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to page 69 of the English Devolution White Paper, published on 16 December 2024, how much funding will be available to UK Research and Innovation to extend regional partnerships. [UIN 20612]

**Minister for AI and Digital Government, Feryal Clark MP:** Our ambition through the innovation commitments announced in the English Devolution White Paper is to generate innovation-led growth across the country, and help places make stronger contributions to a thriving national innovation ecosystem. Through UK Research and Innovation, we will support more local leaders, working in partnership with businesses and universities, to unlock their regions' innovation potential.

The Spending Review settlement set out the overall R&D budget for my department, which is £13.9 billion for 2025/26. Further details of how this funding will be allocated will be announced in due course, and the next phase of the spending review will confirm multi-year budgets for innovation funding.

## **Higher Education: Reform**

**Chi Onwurah MP (Labour):** To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what her plans are for higher education reform; and what the role is of innovation in that process. [UIN 20617]

**Minister for Children and Families, Janet Daby MP:** The government is committed to setting out a plan for reform of the higher education (HE) sector by the summer, focused on five priorities. We will expect our HE providers to:

- Play a stronger role in expanding access and improving outcomes for disadvantaged students.
- Make a stronger contribution to economic growth.
- Play a greater civic role in their communities.

- Raise the bar further on teaching standards, to maintain and improve our world leading reputation and drive out poor practice.
- Drive a sustained efficiency and reform programme.

My noble Friend, the Minister for Skills, is working closely with Lord Vallance to build on HE providers' already significant contribution to innovation, increasing their contribution to the UK economy.

## **Apprentices: Finance**

**Sarah Gibson MP (Liberal Democrats):** To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to continue funding for apprentices undertaking a Level 7 apprenticeship. [UIN 21117; Grouped Questions: 21115, 21116]

**Minister for Children and Families, Janet Daby MP:** The government is committed to spreading opportunities and economic growth with the support of a strong skills system.

This government had a dire fiscal inheritance which has made tough choices necessary to fix the foundations of our economy and prioritise in order to generate opportunities for young people that enable them to make a start in good, fulfilling careers. The department will therefore be asking more employers to step forward and fund Level 7 apprenticeships, outside of the levy-funded growth and skills offer.

The department will take advice from Skills England, who have been engaging with employers on this, and expects to make a final decision on affected apprenticeships in the new year.

Learners who have started these apprenticeships will be funded through to completion.

## **Higher Education: Liability**

**James Naish MP (Labour):** To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will meet with representatives of the ForThe100 to discuss the duty of care owed by higher education providers to their students. [UIN 21515; Grouped Questions: 21514]

**Minister for Children and Families, Janet Daby MP:** The department is determined that children and young people receive the mental health care they deserve. This government is breaking down barriers to opportunity by providing young people with the mental health support they deserve. To support this, this government has



committed to recruiting 8,500 additional staff across children and adult NHS mental health services.

The department continues to work closely with students, parents, mental health experts and the higher education (HE) sector to drive meaningful change in mental health practice through the HE Mental Health Implementation Taskforce. The Taskforce recently published its second stage report, which is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/higher-education-mental-health-implementation-taskforce>.

The department's position is that a duty of care in HE may arise in certain circumstances. Such circumstances would be a matter for the courts to decide, based on the specific facts and context of the case being considered, and will be dependent on the application by a court of accepted common law principles.

My noble Friend, the Minister for Skills, welcomes the opportunity to meet with members of ForThe100 regarding these issues.

## **Mental Health Services: Students**

**Danny Chambers MP (Liberal Democrats):** To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what steps his Department is taking to help integrate accredited (a) counsellors and (b) psychotherapists into mental health support teams for students. [UIN 21120]

**Minister for Care, Stephen Kinnock MP:** We know that too many children and young people are not receiving the mental health care they need, and that waits for mental health services are far too long. We will provide access to a specialist mental health professional in every school so that mental health conditions, such as anxiety and depression, can be identified early on and prevented from developing into more serious conditions in later life. We are working with our colleagues at NHS England and the Department for Education to consider options to deliver this commitment.

Department for Education guidance encourages mental health support teams to work with other existing professionals, such as school or college-based counsellors, educational psychologists, school nurses, pastoral care, educational welfare officers, voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations, local authority provision, primary care, and NHS Children and Young People Mental Health services.

## Innovation

**Jessica Morden MP (Labour):** What steps his Department is taking with universities to support research and innovation. [UIN 901959]

**Minister for AI and Digital Government, Feryal Clark MP:** Research and innovation is key to delivering the government's missions, and universities are essential for this.

We are increasing Core Research funding to over £6.1bn to deliver on the government's research priorities and offer real terms protection to the UK's world leading universities.

This Government has committed to record funding of R&D in the recent budget. Total HMG investment in R&D is rising to a record allocation of £20.4bn in 2025/26

## Sector news

### **Worlds apart: skills and learning inequalities in the UK – Learning and Work Institute report**

On Monday 6 January, the Learning and Work Institute published a report finding the UK has larger gaps in workforce skills between different parts of the country than most other European countries.

Relevant findings include:

- Two thirds of adults in London have higher education qualifications, compared to just one third in Greater Lincolnshire.
- While 71% of Londoners may have a higher education qualification by 2035, only 29% would in Hull and East Yorkshire.
- Closing the gap between London and the rest of the UK would require 4.1 million more people to gain higher education qualifications outside London.

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

### **With tuition fees set to rise again, most recent graduates already consider university bad value for money – YouGov survey**

On Tuesday 7 January, YouGov published the results of a new survey of almost 4,000 graduates from universities in England showing that those who paid £9,000 or more a year in tuition fees are significantly more likely to feel that the cost of their higher education represented bad value for money than graduates in previous years.

You can [read the full article](#).

### **Annual report on education spending in England: 2024–25 – IFS report**

On Wednesday 8 January, the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) published its latest estimates of spending per pupil and resource challenges across different stages of education in England.

Higher education findings include:

1. Upfront funding for teaching undergraduate students has declined in recent years, standing at £9,750 per year for the 2023–24 university entry cohort (including fees and teaching grants, less bursaries). This is £2,300 or 19% lower in real terms than in 2012–13, driven by cash-terms freezes in the cap on tuition fees for all but one year between 2012 and 2024. This real-terms fall took upfront funding per student back to the same real-terms level as in 2011–12, just before the tripling of the fee caps, and back to the same level as in the early 1990s.
2. The new government chose to increase the tuition fee cap for the 2025–26 academic year in line with RPIX inflation, increasing the fee cap from £9,250 to £9,535 (which applies to new and existing students). It is not clear if this policy of indexation will continue. If it does, then upfront resources per student will rise to about £10,000 for students entering courses in September 2025.
3. Until recently, there had been some good news for university finances, despite the long-running freeze in domestic fees. Income from international student fees had risen sharply, to £9.4 billion (a fifth of the sector’s income) in 2022–23, and a revaluation of the USS pension scheme had improved sector finances. However, student numbers in 2024 are well below forecasts (23% lower for international students). Together with the rise in employers’ NICs, the Office for Students forecast that a sector-wide surplus of £1.5 billion in 2022–23 could become a sector-wide deficit of around £1.6 billion in 2025–26, unless savings are made.
4. The new government has chosen not to reverse the significant real-terms cuts in maintenance support for students of recent years. In 2025–26, the poorest students will be entitled to borrow around £1,125 (10%) less in real terms towards their living costs than in 2020. The government is yet to signal any long-run intention for the future of maintenance support, including whether or not they will re-introduce grants.

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

## **Labour’s tuition fee rise made more palatable by maintenance support increase – HEPI polling**

On Thursday 9 January, the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) published new polling by Savanta on the decision by the Secretary of State for Education, Bridget Phillipson, to [raise tuition fees](#) in England.

Key findings:

- Students overwhelmingly oppose the tuition fee increase and, despite the arguments of the Government and [Universities UK](#), do not see it as 'necessary'.
- However, when the increase in maintenance support is included, students are split evenly between thinking the change is a good thing or a bad thing. This suggests the maintenance increase made the fee rise appear more acceptable to students.
- Students are split significantly down gender lines, with female students opposed to the increase while male students are more lukewarm. Younger students are more opposed to the increase while older students are more supportive.

You can [read the full polling](#).

## **A level of uncertainty: How to resolve the debate over the future of Level 7 apprenticeships – SMF briefing paper**

On Thursday 9 January, the Social Market Foundation (SMF) published a briefing paper empirically testing the hypothesis that Level 7 apprenticeships boost social mobility.

The main findings include:

- 1 in 6 apprenticeships are now taken by university graduates.
- An estimated £431 million of apprenticeship funding was used up last year by university graduates, including £182 million for graduates starting Level 7 apprenticeships.
- Management courses for existing staff that have been rebadged as 'apprenticeships' used an estimated £150 million of funding last year.

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

## **National Student Survey: Procedures for investigating allegations of inappropriate influence – OfS document**

On Thursday 9 January, the Office for Students (OfS) published a document outlining procedures for the reporting, handling and resolution of allegations of inappropriate influence in the promotion and running of the National Student Survey (NSS).

You can [read the full document](#).

## **Monthly monitoring of entry clearance visa applications – Home Office statistics**

On Thursday 9 January, the Home Office published the latest statistics on numbers of people with an intention to enter the UK for work and study reasons.

Key insights include:

- Applications from Sponsored study visa main applicants in January to December 2024 (407,900) were 14% lower than January to December 2023.
- There were 22,600 applications from dependants of students between January and December 2024, 84% fewer than January to December 2023.

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