



# The All-Party Parliamentary University Group



Dear Colleague,

The White Paper, Higher Education and Research Bill and associated documents have given the education sector and others plenty to digest, in a programme that has developed and broadened since the publication of the Green Paper (and which the forthcoming Skills Bill may elaborate further). The concept of a TEF has been broadly

welcomed, as has the more circumspect pace at which it is being developed, and universities are engaging with the technical consultation with a close eye on how metrics will capture the essence of teaching excellence. The linkage between the outcomes of teaching assessment and inflation-based increases to the fee cap may remain an area of discussion, though in protecting the quality of provision against rising costs it is significant that no TEF outcome currently envisaged leads to real-terms increases. The creation of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) includes a commitment to protect dual support, and an intent to remove barriers to the development of interdisciplinary research. Interest will focus on protecting the Haldane principle and the research ring-fence (including the integrity of QR funding), and ensuring that the Research Councils, Research England and Innovate UK retain an appropriate degree of autonomy inside the larger structure. It may well be that universities and others in education would welcome an explicit duty on this body and on the new Office for Students (OfS) to collaborate in promoting the research-teaching symbiosis that sits at the heart of many universities/providers (not least to prevent research and taught postgraduates falling between two stools).

A key question for all universities/providers (and for their students) will be how the acceleration of competition in the White Paper/Bill is calibrated and governed. It is reasonable to expect a regulated market to include some regulation; competition already exists in the sector and few will see issues with new entrants that are genuinely high-quality. How this is balanced with co-ownership of regulation by a broadening sector (potentially with significant numbers of new entrants) and the extent of the powers of the OfS and Secretary of State remains a core question. Concerns for universities/providers may also focus on some key specifics, including: (1) Standards, which are currently (under the 1992 Act) the responsibility of universities; here, for the first time, OfS has powers over standards, not only to assess but also to rate them. How would effective co-ownership with providers work? Of related interest, the Bill allows the Secretary of State to give guidance to the OfS that may 'be framed by reference to' particular courses, explicitly

reversing the position of the 1992 Act. (2) The award and removal of Degree Awarding Powers, and controls on sector entry and exit, where there may be concerns about minimum requirements, and about abolishing the force of university charters (though, with greater freedom for HECs, this also helps create a level playing-field). (3) The powers of compulsion in the Bill, including that of entry and search where there are reasonable grounds for suspecting a serious breach of registration or funding conditions. There the debate may well focus on standards of proof, safeguards, and the separation of powers – so that, e.g., one agency or legal person is not simultaneously setting, policing and judging – and on maintaining the principle of fairness, included in the 1992 Act but not in the new legislation, alongside the right to make representations and of independent appeal.

Alongside the detail, where debate and discussion inevitably focus, several themes in the White Paper/Bill contain opportunity as well as challenge, and can help strengthen the way in which we operate as universities, including the focus on the student interest, on quality, and on streamlining regulation. These have already been welcomed, and will continue to be, as will the commitment of White Paper/Bill to promote the world-class teaching and research reputation of UK universities, and ensuring that UK higher education is as good as it can be.

**Professor Andrew Wathey**

Vice-Chancellor, Northumbria University

---

**Upcoming meetings**

**Tuesday 28 June**

University APPG Summer Reception

*7-9pm, Churchill Room*

Professor Julia Buckingham, Vice-Chancellor, Brunel University of London, Shadow Higher Education Minister Gordon Marsden MP and Minister of State for Universities and Science, Jo Johnson MP

---

This update is produced by Universities UK. It provides links to all relevant parliamentary business and sector announcements for the previous week and notes upcoming business. The APPG council have also suggested that university members may like to suggest inclusions from their institutions, such as major reports, speeches or events. If you did wish to do so, please do get in touch.

The University APPG twitter account ([@universityappg](https://twitter.com/universityappg)) will also be tweeting updates of parliamentary business and sector announcements. We would encourage all members to follow the account.

The University APPG blog is now up and running and I would like to encourage members who may be interested in writing a piece to please get in touch.

---

## Table of Contents

<b>Forthcoming Business</b> .....	<b>4</b>
Adjournment debate.....	4
Lords Oral Question .....	4
Business, Innovation and Skills Oral Questions .....	4
University APPG .....	4
<b>Written Questions</b> .....	<b>4</b>
Overseas students: loans .....	4
Soil: scientists.....	4

## **Forthcoming Business**

### **Adjournment debate**

On Monday 27 June Valerie Vaz MP has tabled an adjournment debate on student loan repayments.

### **Lords Oral Question**

Lord Leigh of Hurley will ask what steps the government is taking to counter anti-Semitism on university campuses in the United Kingdom, on Monday 27 June from 2.30pm.

### **Business, Innovation and Skills Oral Questions**

On Tuesday 28 June BIS Ministers will answer oral questions, the last date for tabling questions is Wednesday 22 June.

### **University APPG**

On Tuesday 28 June the University APPG holds its summer reception, hearing from Professor Julia Buckingham, Gordon Marsden MP and Jo Johnson MP.

---

## **Written Questions**

The answers to written questions can be found by clicking the name of the MP or Lord beneath the title. Members may appear more than once if they have asked several questions on the same topic.

### **Overseas students: loans**

[Baroness Wolf of Dulwich](#)

### **Soil: scientists**

[Baroness Miller of Chilthorne](#)

---