



# The All-Party Parliamentary University Group



Dear colleague,

Today there are only 90 days left to go before the one in a lifetime EU Referendum vote. This is an important topic for universities, both staff and students, and parliamentarians alike, no matter which side of the debate you fall. Last week we published an issue paper on the impact for universities if there was a Brexit, Bernard Jenkin MP supplied the leave argument and Professor Dame Julia Goodfellow the remain. [You can read both essays here.](#)

On 1 March the group had an excellent meeting to discuss BME students and social mobility. There was a lively discussion on the use of the term BME and David Lammy provided some challenge to the sector attendees on their work in this area. This was topical for the group as the Social Mobility Advisory Group is due to be providing recommendations to Government and the sector in the next few months. For those that are interested in learning more, Niaomi Collett's [blog](#), Professor Anna Vignoles [slides](#) and a [note of the meeting](#) are all available online.

The big news of the month has been the *almost* confirmation of an HE Bill in the Queen's Speech. We know now that the State Opening will take place on Wednesday 18 May and a Bill has been trailed in many news outlets over the last few weeks. Our meeting above on social mobility fits well with the expected theme of the speech 'life chances'. Of course in the meantime, we are still waiting BIS' response to the Green Paper, and whether this comes before or after 18 May is still to be determined.

Finally, I'm looking forward to Chairing our next meeting on Tuesday 12 April on Flexible Pathways. Just confirmed for the panel is the Rt Hon David Willetts, who we know well as the former higher education Minister and now of course sits in the House of Lords. He will be discussing his thoughts on the part-time system, including where Government should have previously and could now intervene.

Lord Norton of Louth

**Co-Chair, All-Party Parliamentary University Group**

## Upcoming meetings

### **Tuesday 12 April**

Flexible Pathways: part-time, adult education and lifelong learning

*8.30am-10am, Dining Room B, House of Commons*

Peter Horrocks, Vice-Chancellor, The Open University

Martin Doel, Chief Executive, Association of Colleges

Ruth Spellman, Chief Executive, Workers' Educational Association

Rt Hon Lord Willetts, Former Minister for Universities and Science

### **Wednesday 25 May**

Students as consumers in their education; where student fees go, how universities explain their financial decisions to students, the public and government (Joint meeting with the APPG on Students)

*6pm-7.30pm, Committee Room 2a, followed by dinner*

Speakers to be confirmed

### **Tuesday 28 June**

University APPG Summer Reception

*Churchill Room, times to be confirmed*

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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.

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## Forthcoming Business

### Recess

The House of Commons enters Easter Recess on today (24 March), the Lords began Recess yesterday (23 March). Both Houses return on 11 April.

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## Immigration Bill

### Immigration Skills Charge

The government has announced that the proposed Immigration Skills Charge will not apply to jobs skilled to PhD level or to international students undertaking post-study work.

The Immigration Skills Charge is a proposed levy on employers sponsoring Tier 2 visas. The government had asked for advice from the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) as to details of how the charge, which is being legislated for in the Immigration Bill currently nearing the end of its scrutiny in Parliament, should be applied. The MAC had proposed a levy of £1,000 per year of the visa for every sponsored employee, with no exemptions. Following lobbying by Universities UK and a number of member institutions, the government has announced an exemption for PhD-level jobs and for those switching from Tier 4 visas. A lower amount will also apply to small businesses, and to either all or only small charities – the statement by the minister is ambiguous and we will be seeking clarity. See the below excerpt from the debate in the House of Lords on Monday 21 March.

Lord Bates: Following careful consideration, I am able to announce that the immigration skills charge of £1,000 per migrant per year will be paid by employers who sponsor tier 2 migrants. The charge will be collected by the Home Office. [...] A reduced rate of £364 per annum will apply to small businesses and charities as defined in the Immigration Rules. This is consistent with other lower fees applied to these organisations. *In addition, an exemption will be applied to migrants undertaking occupations skilled to PhD level. A list of these occupations is included in the Immigration and Nationality (Fees) Regulations. They are primarily science and research roles. There will also be an exemption for graduates who switch from tier 4 to tier 2 in order to take up a position in the UK.* These two exemptions build on the Government's strong post-study work offer for international students and are intended to protect the UK's position as a centre of excellence for education and research.

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## 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.

### **Higher education: Ethnic groups**

[Danny Kinahan MP](#)

### **Student loans**

[Baroness Burt of Solihull](#)

### **Universities: Admissions**

[Lord Livermore](#)

[Lord Livermore](#)

### **Graduates**

[Lord Livermore](#)

### **Higher education: Mental health**

[Luciana Berger MP](#)

### **Students: Loans**

[Gordon Marsden MP](#)

### **Disabled Students' Allowance: Impact assessments**

[Chris Leslie MP](#)

### **Postgraduate education: Social work**

[Stephen Timms MP](#)

### **Students: Finance**

[Baroness Burt of Solihull](#)

### **Teachers: Training**

[Stephen Timms MP](#)

[Lord Addington](#)

[Lord Addington](#)

### **Junior doctors: Training**

[Fabian Hamilton MP](#)

## **Sector news**

### **SMF analysis**

On Wednesday 23 March the Social Market Foundation published its new analysis on the widening participation goals set by the Prime Minister. The first ambition is to double the proportion of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds going into higher education. There is a second ambition to increase by 20% the numbers of students from BME backgrounds.

The full analysis can be found here: <http://www.smf.co.uk/publications/widening-participation/>

### **HESA: UKPIs non-continuation rates**

Also on Wednesday 23 March, HESA published the non-continuation rates for UK domiciled students at an HE provider. They are presented in two ways. The first considers students who start in a particular year, and looks at whether they are still in higher education one year later (for full-time students) or two years later (for part-time students). The second method looks at projected outcomes over a longer period.

The tables can be found here: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/pis/noncon>

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