



All-Party Parliamentary University Group

Weekly update

26 – 30 May 2025

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

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Parliamentary business

Recess

On Thursday 22 May, the House of Commons and House of Lords both rose for Whitsun recess and will return on Monday 2 June.

Forthcoming business

Employment Rights Bill – HoL Committee Stage Day 6 and 7

On Tuesday 3 June and Thursday 5 June, the Employment Rights Bill will proceed to day 6 and 7 of Committee Stage in the House of Lords.

You can watch the session ([day 6](#) and [day 7](#)).

Further Education and Skills – HoC Education Committee oral evidence session

On Tuesday 3 June from 10:00am, the House of Commons Education Committee will hear oral evidence as part of their inquiry into “Further Education and Skills”.

Witnesses include:

- Qasim Hussain (Vice President (Further Education) at National Union of Students)
- Ruth Perry (Senior Policy Manager at Natspec)
- Denise Rawls (Executive Director at The National Network for the Education of Care Leavers (NNECL))
- Dr Emily Tanner (Programme Head for Post-14 Education and Skills at Nuffield Foundation)
- Dr Fiona Aldridge (Chief Executive Officer at The Skills Federation)
- David Gaughan (Head of Employer Services at West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA))
- Jane Gratton (Deputy Director of Public Policy at British Chambers of Commerce)
- Dr Susan Pember CBE (Policy Advisor at HOLEX)

You can [watch the session](#).

Financing and Scaling UK Science and Technology: Innovation, Investment, Industry - HoL Science and Technology Committee oral evidence

On Tuesday 3 June from 10:15am, the House of Lords Science and Technology Committee will hear oral evidence as part of their inquiry into “Financing and Scaling UK Science and Technology: Innovation, Investment, Industry”.

Witnesses include:

- Saul Klein OBE
- Sir Jonathan Symonds CBE
- Ian Merricks
- Irene Graham OBE (CEO at ScaleUp Institute)

You can [watch the session](#).

UK Research and Innovation – HoC Public Accounts Committee oral evidence

On Thursday 5 June from 10:00am, the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee will hear oral evidence as part of their inquiry into “UK Research and Innovation”.

Witnesses include:

- Sir David Grant CBE (Lead, Independent Review of UK Research and Innovation 2022)
- Professor Paul Boyle CBE (Universities UK Board Member and Vice Chancellor, Swansea University)
- Professor Dame Ottoline Leyser DBE FRS (Chief Executive, UK Research and Innovation (UKRI))
- Sarah Munby (Permanent Secretary)
- Alexandra Jones (Director General, Science, Innovation and Growth, Department of Science, Innovation and Technology)
- Siobhan Peters (Chief Finance Officer, UKRI)

You can [watch the session](#).

Written questions and statements

Youth Mobility Scheme: EU Countries

Mike Wood (Conservative): To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, with reference to paragraph 13 of the policy paper entitled UK-EU Summit: Common Understanding, published on 19 May 2025, what estimate he has made of the annual number of EU visitors there would be under a youth experience scheme; whether he plans to negotiate a cap; and whether the scheme would provide a full right to work in the UK. [UIN53068]

Nick Thomas-Symonds: We have agreed that we will work towards the establishment of a balanced youth experience scheme with the EU. We have agreed that any scheme will be time-limited and capped, and we have also been clear that it should be in line with the UK's existing schemes with countries like Australia and New Zealand. The exact parameters will be subject to negotiation.

Immigration Controls: Young People

Tracy Gilbert (Labour): To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office, whether his Department has undertaken preparatory work on a potential youth mobility scheme with the EU. [UIN 52444]

Nick Thomas-Symonds: We have agreed that we will work towards the establishment of a balanced youth experience scheme with the EU. We have agreed that any scheme will be time-limited and capped, and we have also been clear that it should be in line with the UK's existing schemes with countries like Australia and New Zealand. The exact parameters will be subject to negotiation.

Civil Society: Employers' Contributions

Mary Glendon (Labour): To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of establishing a fund to support (a) voluntary, (b) community and (c) social enterprise sector organisations to offset increases to National Insurance Contributions. [UIN53042]

Stephanie Peacock: This government recognises the vital role that charitable organisations and community groups play in providing crucial support to families and individuals across the country. These organisations, as well as the wider Voluntary,

Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector, are integral to the Government's vision for national renewal and delivery of the five national missions.

DCMS Ministers have met with representatives from the VCSE sector and are aware of their concerns about the National Insurance contributions (NICs) changes. We recognise the need to protect the smallest businesses and charities, which is why we have more than doubled the Employment Allowance to £10,500, meaning that more than half of businesses (including charities) with NICs liabilities will either gain or see no change this year.

We continue to promote availability of funding for smaller charities in several ways, including delivery of a number of grant schemes, such as the 'Know Your Neighbourhood Fund'. Support for charities is also available through social investment which provides access to grants, repayable finance and a blend of the two. In particular, this government is continuing to look at how dormant assets can be used to support the availability of finance to facilitate VCSEs becoming more entrepreneurial and financially resilient. An estimated £350 million will flow into the Dormant Assets Scheme between 2024-28, with details on how this money will be distributed to be provided in due course.

Education: British National (Overseas)

Rupa Huq (Labour): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she has made an assessment of the potential merits of applying home tuition fee status to students who hold a British National (Overseas) visa. [UIN52277]

Janet Daby: Higher education institutions in England are autonomous bodies and it is for them to assess whether the fees for students who do not meet the criteria for automatic home fee status should be reduced or waived in line with individual circumstances.

To qualify for automatic home fee status in England, a person must have settled status or a 'recognised connection' to the UK. A recognised connection includes persons who are covered by the EU Withdrawal Agreement, have long residence in this country, or who have been granted international protection by the Home Office. There are also requirements associated with ordinary residence in the UK.

The British National (Overseas) immigration route reflects the UK's historic and moral commitment to those people of Hong Kong. Subject to meeting the normal eligibility requirements, Hong Kong British National (Overseas) status holders will be able to qualify for student finance and home fee status once they have acquired settled status in the UK.

There are no plans to amend the eligibility requirements for Hong Kong British National (Overseas) status holders as these are in line with those that apply to most other persons on routes to settlement.

Education: British National (Overseas)

James Naish (Labour): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to provide (a) guidance and (b) training to (i) local authority careers services and (ii) college course providers on the (A) rights and (B) eligibility of British National (Overseas) visa holders for post-16 (1) education and (2) adult learning programmes.[UIN52352]

Janet Daby: The government is spending £1.4 billion on the Adult Skills Fund (ASF) in the 2024/25 academic year, which funds English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) provision for adult learners.

The general principle within ASF rules is that adults must be ordinarily resident in the UK for the three years preceding their first day of learning, although there are exceptions set out in the department's funding rules. The department's guidance to ASF providers, including local authorities on residency eligibility is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adult-skills-fund-funding-rules/adult-skills-fund-funding-and-performance-management-rules-2024-to-2025>.

Although British Nationals (Overseas) arriving from Hong Kong are not immediately eligible for ASF funding, funding of up to £850 per adult is available to support access to English language classes for those on the British Nationals (Overseas) route. For those aged 16-19, eligibility is explained in the student eligibility section of the statutory guidance 'Advice: funding rules for 16 to 19 provision 2025 to 2026', which can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/advice-funding-regulations-for-post-16-provision/advice-funding-rules-for-16-to-19-provision-2025-to-2026#sectionthree>

Currently, 62% of the ASF is devolved to mayoral strategic authorities (MSAs). Devolution works because local leaders can use their mandate for change to take decisions needed to drive growth and convene local partners to tackle shared problems. While MSAs follow the department's rules on residency, decisions around how they spend their devolved funding and their approach to monitoring are for them to make.

Grouped Questions: 52350, 52351

Research: Higher Education

Victoria Collins (Liberal Democrats): To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps his Department is taking with universities to develop research and development policies in the (a) East and (b) rest of England. [UIN52766]

Feryal Clark: The Government is clear that universities are a key partner in research and development, which is fundamental to kickstarting economic growth and delivering the Government's missions. DSIT values the views of universities and engages closely with them through a programme of one to one meetings, roundtables, visits, and sector group meetings, as appropriate, to develop research policies for England and the rest of the UK.

Department of Health and Social Care: NHS Learning Support Fund

Andrew George (Liberal Democrats): To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to the guidance entitled NHS Financial Support for Health Students (Fourth Edition): NHS Learning Support Fund, published on 29 June 2020, how many regional incentive payments were made to eligible students in areas where there is a workforce shortage in each of the last four years; and whether these payments are still available. [UIN52177]

Karin Smyth: The regional incentive payments that were referenced in the NHS Learning Support Fund (LSF) fourth edition rules published on 29 June 2020 were not introduced, and therefore no payments have been made. The LSF scheme rules are reviewed annually ahead of each academic year.

To reform the National Health Service and make it fit for the future, we have launched a 10-Year Health Plan as part of the Government's five long-term missions.

The Government will publish a refreshed workforce plan to deliver the transformed health service we will build over the next decade and treat patients on time again. We will ensure the NHS has the right people, in the right places, with the right skills to deliver the care patients need when they need it.

Department for Education: Health Services and Higher Education

Peter Prinsley (Labour): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if she will establish a cross-Departmental ministerial taskforce with the Department for Health and Social Care to support workforce planning between the higher education sector and health service. [UIN48691]

Janet Daby: The Department of Health and Social Care works closely with the Department for Education on a wide range of matters to ensure cross-departmental collaboration on workforce planning in higher education and the healthcare service.

The government is preparing the 10 Year Health Plan which will set out a bold agenda to reform and repair the NHS. Ensuring we have the right people, in the right places and with the right skills, will be central to this vision.

The department continues to work closely with the Department of Health and Social Care on the 10 Year Health Plan.

Rented Housing: Students

Lizzi Collinge (Labour): To ask the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, whether she has made an assessment of the potential impact of the proposed Ground 4A in the Renters' Rights Bill on landlords who rent (a) one and (b) two-bedroom properties to students. [UIN53739]

Matthew Pennycook: The proposed new ground for possession (Ground 4A) in the Renters' Rights Bill is intended to facilitate the maintenance of the annual cycle of student letting for most typical students, namely groups of full-time students living together in Houses in Multiple Occupancy.

Less typical students who may require greater security of tenure, for example postgraduate couples who have put down roots in their area, will be able to enjoy the benefits of the new tenancy system the Bill introduces.

The Renters' Rights Bill Impact Assessment looked across the package of reforms and received a 'green' rating from the Regulatory Policy Committee, meaning it is 'fit for purpose'.

Treasury: UK Relations with EU

Mike Wood (Conservative): To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reference to paragraph 14 of the policy paper entitled UK-EU Summit: Common Understanding, published on 19 May 2025, what is the estimated change in financial payments from the UK to the EU and its agencies in each of the next four years. [UIN53074]

Darren Jones: We have agreed to work towards the association of the UK to the EU Erasmus+ programme. The specific terms of this association, including mutually agreed financial terms, should be determined as part of that process in order to ensure a fair balance as regards the contributions of and benefits to the United Kingdom.

The government has been clear that the UK will only associate to Erasmus+ on significantly improved financial terms which take into account the UK's financial contribution and the number of UK participants who receive funding from the programme.

Department for Education: Apprentices

Neil O'Brien (Conservative): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what number and proportion of Level 7 apprenticeship (a) starts and (b) completions were for people aged (i) under 22 and (ii) 22 or over, in each year for which data is available. [UIN49428]

Janet Daby: The attached file shows level 7 apprenticeship starts and achievements for the 2015/16 to 2023/24 academic years broken down by learner age as requested.

Research: Finance

Maureen Burke (Labour): To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what steps he is taking to support UK Research and Innovation; and whether he has made an assessment of the potential impact of increasing doctoral studentships in the UK on the level of financial support for researchers, in the context of (a) increases in the cost of living and (b) international comparisons of PhD stipends.[UIN53308]

Feryal Clark: The Government will provide £8.8 billion funding to UK Research and Innovation in 2025-26, of which £773 million is allocated to talent, including doctoral students. UKRI sets a minimum stipend level for the students that it funds and

announced in January that this would increase by 8% (to £20,780) from 1 October, with additional funding provided to UKRI training grants to support the uprating. UKRI considers a range of factors when setting stipends, including affordability, potential impact on the number of students, the welfare of students, ensuring that doctoral training remains attractive to potential candidates, and international peers.

Universities: Antisemitism

The Lord Turnberg (Labour): To ask His Majesty's Government whether they intend to meet university vice-chancellors to discuss how they are dealing with the rising incidence of antisemitism on campuses. [HL7497]

The Rt Hon. the Baroness Smith of Malvern: My right hon. Friend, Secretary of State for Education is due to host a roundtable shortly with leading vice chancellors to discuss what more can be done collectively, and at all levels, to make our universities safe and inclusive environments for all.

Departmental officials continue to liaise closely with Universities UK and with key Jewish community stakeholders, to remain apprised of issues and how they are being handled by universities.

British Council: Soft Power

The Lord Weir of Ballyholme (Democratic Unionist Party): To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the British Council's contribution to UK soft power and influence globally. [HL7499]

The Baroness Chapman of Darlington: The British Council plays a leading role in promoting UK values and interests through its work in arts and culture, education, and promotion of the English language. The British Council's 2023 Global Perceptions report survey demonstrates that cultural relations initiatives are connected to higher levels of trust in the UK Government. The average score for trust in the UK Government given by young people surveyed across the G20 was 54 per cent. However, for those who had participated in a UK cultural initiative, the score was 62 per cent, and where this initiative was produced by the British Council, it was 69 per cent.

The Government is committed to working with the British Council to ensure its financial sustainability. Issues related to funding are being considered in the round as part of the Spending Review process, which will allocate departmental budgets between 2026-27 and 2028-29.

Grouped Questions: HL7500

Education: Exports

The Lord Hay of Ballyore (Democratic Unionist Party): To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to ensure that the UK education system remains globally competitive. [HL7475]

The Rt Hon. the Baroness Smith of Malvern: The UK remains a highly attractive study destination for international students, with four universities in the top 10 and 15 universities in the top 100, alongside a wide array of high quality institutions which offer a fulfilling and enjoyable experience to international students from around the world.

As my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education made clear in her video message last year, this government welcomes international students who enrich our university campuses, forge lifelong friendships with our domestic students and become global ambassadors for the UK.

The immigration white paper, published on 12 May, confirmed that we will retain the graduate visa, but reduce its duration from two years to 18 months. This will maintain our competitive post-study offer whilst ensuring individuals on this route obtain employment in graduate level roles and contribute to the country's skills needs more quickly. The department will issue further details on implementation of the white paper measures in due course.

Education: Exports and Overseas Students

The Baroness Alexander of Clevedon FRSE (Labour): To ask His Majesty's Government whether they still intend to meet targets for (1) international student recruitment, and (2) education export value, set out in the International Education Strategy, published in March 2019. [HL7461]

The Rt Hon. the Baroness Smith of Malvern: The department, along with the Department for Business and Trade and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, is currently conducting a review of the international education strategy to ensure that it continues to be an effective tool in increasing the value of education exports and reflects the priorities of education stakeholders, businesses and Ministers.

Overseas Students: Fees and Charges

The Baroness Alexander of Clevedon FRSE (Labour): To ask His Majesty's Government, with regard to the white paper published on 12 May, Restoring control over the immigration system, whether the policy priorities for the proposed levy on tuition fees for international students who attend Scottish higher education institutions will be set by the Scottish Government. [HL7460)]

The Rt Hon. the Baroness Smith of Malvern: The immigration white paper sets out a series of measures that will achieve a reduction in net migration, while maintaining the UK's globally competitive offer to international students and making a significant contribution to growth by boosting our skills base. This includes the commitment to explore the introduction of a levy on higher education (HE) provider income from international students, with proceeds to be reinvested in the domestic HE and skills system. We will set out more details around the levy in the Autumn Budget.

Analysis of the potential impacts is based on the levy applying to English HE providers only. We will fully consult all the devolved governments on the implementation of the international student levy.

Sector news

UCU lays ground for its first ever strike ballot against Labour

On 26 May, delegates at the University and College Union's (UCU) annual Congress have overwhelmingly voted to prepare for an industrial dispute with the Secretary of State for Education over university funding, the first step towards a potential strike ballot.

The proposed dispute would be over the funding issues successive governments have created that have led to the current financial crisis. Most recently the Labour government has reduced funding for specialist provision by over £100m and proposed further restrictions on international student recruitment, including a levy on international students.

The union, which is the UK's largest post-16 education union, representing over 120k education staff, is demanding the Education Secretary addresses the funding issues in order to avoid the dispute.

UCU has already raised the alarm that over 10,000 higher education jobs are at risk. In response to the threatened cuts, its members have won ballots for strike action at 16 universities so far this academic year and are fighting to protect jobs and course provision.

You can [read more on the UCU website](#).

Department for Education announces £3 billion apprenticeship budget

On 27 May, the UK government has announced a major skills reform package to address critical workforce shortages and bolster economic growth, with significant implications for higher education and the broader post-16 sector.

Central to this initiative is a strategic shift in apprenticeship funding, moving resources away from Level 7 (master's level) apprenticeships and redirecting them towards training at lower levels, such as Level 2 and Level 3 apprenticeships. This reallocation reflects the government's view that investing in training at these levels will deliver the greatest impact in addressing immediate skills shortages in priority sectors like construction, health and social care, and digital technology.

The reforms also include a 32% increase in the Immigration Skills Charge, which is expected to fund up to 45,000 additional training places. This funding boost underscores the government's emphasis on reducing the UK's reliance on migration by investing in domestic talent pipelines. In parallel, 13 new Level 2 construction courses will be launched for adults in non-devolved areas under the Free Courses for Jobs scheme, broadening the availability of practical, job-focused education.

Education Secretary, Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson MP, highlighted that these reforms align with the government's wider Plan for Change, aiming to ensure that more young people can access high-quality vocational training that offers both career progression and economic security. While the shift away from funding master's-level apprenticeships may affect some pathways within higher education, the overall package is designed to prioritise training that supports immediate labour market needs and provides clear routes into secure employment.

Vivienne Stern, Chief Executive of Universities UK responded to the Department for Education's announcement that funding will be diverted away from Level 7 (masters-level) apprenticeships from January 2026:

"Confirmation today that the vast majority of Level 7 apprenticeships will no longer receive public funding will be disappointing news for many universities and, more importantly, employers. Universities have grown Level 7 apprenticeship provision, encouraged by government and employer and student demand. These apprenticeships have become extremely valuable to many sectors and essential public services. In 2023/24 there were 2,040 Level 7 apprenticeship starts in Health, Public Services and Care apprenticeships - a figure which has significantly grown in the last 5 years. The reality is that the NHS will need to continue to fund this training, but it will now have to be taken from existing budgets. These cuts are also yet another financial blow to universities, on top of National Insurance hikes and the proposed levy on international students.

"The exemption for those aged 21 and under will leave so few students on these courses eligible for funding that many will become unviable at a time when Skills England's forecasts show we need more high-level skills in the economy. We recognise the tough fiscal choices government faces but supporting early careers need not come at the expense of upskilling and retraining the existing workforce."

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

UK and EU launch AI supercomputing partnership to boost innovation

On 27 May, the UK government announced a new collaboration with the EU to enhance artificial intelligence (AI) research and innovation. Public research organisations in the UK are invited to apply to host the UK's AI Factory Antenna, a facility that would connect British researchers to Europe's advanced supercomputers. This initiative aims to accelerate breakthroughs in sectors such as healthcare and clean energy.

The collaboration is part of the government's Plan for Change and follows a recent UK-EU agreement to strengthen ties in science and technology. Minister for AI, Feryal Clark, stated that by partnering with Europe, the UK is providing innovators with the computational power needed to address global challenges and drive economic growth.

Applications to host the AI Factory Antenna must be submitted by 11 June 2025. The selected organisation will become the UK's gateway to EuroHPC's supercomputing res, facilitating the development of advanced AI models and supporting high-skilled job creation across the country.

This initiative builds on the UK's growing investment in AI infrastructure, including £44 billion in data centres since July 2024, and aligns with the forthcoming Compute Strategy, which aims to increase national compute capacity twenty-fold over the next decade.

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

The future of the campus university: 10 trends that will change higher education – HEPI Report

On 29 May, the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) published a new Policy Note authored by Professor Edward Peck, Ben McCarthy and Jenny Shaw. The report offers insights into the evolving landscape of higher education and prompts discussion on the future of campus-based learning.

- **Emphasis on student support and personal development:** The report suggests that activities traditionally considered co-curricular or extra-curricular will become central to the student experience, focusing on employment skills and personal growth alongside academic knowledge.

- Curriculum adaptation in the age of AI: With the rise of generative AI, curricula are expected to prioritise higher-order thinking skills, such as complex analysis and critical thinking, over rote memorization.
- Regionalisation of undergraduate choices: An anticipated trend is the strengthening of regional ties, with more students attending universities closer to home, facilitating better integration between secondary and higher education institutions.
- Enhanced role of technology in student support: While AI will not replace specialist support staff, it is expected to play a significant role in identifying and responding to students' needs, particularly in recognizing those who are vulnerable or in distress.
- Financial model adjustments: The report acknowledges the need for universities to adapt their business models in response to changing financial contexts, emphasizing the importance of innovative approaches to sustain and enhance the value of campus-based education.

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

Supply and demand for high-cost subjects and graduate progression to growth sector – UUK Analysis

Universities UK (UUK) published a report highlighting growing concerns over funding for high-cost courses in key sectors such as engineering, computing, and physical sciences. The report reveals that applications for these courses have increased by 14% since 2019, yet enrolments have only risen by 5%, creating a gap between demand and available places. In addition, the proportion of university places allocated to these courses has declined from 52% in 2015/16 to 47% in 2023/24, despite their importance for sectors like clean energy and advanced manufacturing.

The report notes that graduates from high-cost courses are 1.7 times more likely to work in the clean energy sector and seven times more likely to work in advanced manufacturing compared to other graduates. However, universities' capacity to meet this demand is being undermined by declining funding. The Strategic Priorities Grant (SPG), which supports high-cost courses, has seen its real-term value fall by 18.4% between 2018–19 and 2025–26, and a recent government announcement revealed a £108 million cut to the SPG.

Vivienne Stern, Chief Executive of UUK, said that without increased investment, universities will be unable to expand these courses, hindering the UK's ability to train homegrown talent in key sectors. She warned that many high-cost courses already cost twice as much to deliver as the combined income from tuition fees and public funding, making expansion financially unviable.

The report calls on the government to increase funding for high-cost courses to ensure universities can meet student demand and deliver the skilled graduates needed for the UK economy.

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