Political Affairs Digest

A regular digest of House of Commons, House of Lords and higher education sector business. If you would like more information on parliamentary business, or advice on engaging with Parliament or a parliamentarian, please contact:

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Click on the items in the Table of Contents to go straight to the debates, answers, forthcoming business, etc.
# Table of Contents

**Parliamentary Business** ................................................................................................. 3  
Education Committee session with Universities Minister .................................................... 3

**Forthcoming business** .................................................................................................. 3  
BEIS oral questions ........................................................................................................... 3
Lords debate on social mobility ......................................................................................... 3
Lords debate teaching arts and creative subjects during Covid-19 .................................. 3
Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination Bill second reading ............................... 4
Lords debate on tuition fees and debt of nursing, midwifery and allied healthcare students ................................................................. 4

**Written Questions** ........................................................................................................ 4  
Tuition fees and grants for nursing, midwifery and allied healthcare students .......... 4
Furloughing university employees on zero hours contracts ........................................... 5
Access to education for disabled people during Covid-19 ............................................. 5
Insolvency .......................................................................................................................... 6
Financial support for universities .................................................................................... 7
Immigration offenders removed who arrived to UK on student visas ............................ 7
Qualification for home fee status ...................................................................................... 8
International student recruitment ..................................................................................... 9
Research and development funding ............................................................................... 10
Charity contribution to research and development funding ......................................... 10
Funding to research departments at universities not in receipt of a TEF award ........... 11
Student number controls - Scotland .............................................................................. 11
Financial support for charity-funded PhD students ...................................................... 12
No detriment policies ...................................................................................................... 13
Attainment level of children in care at undergraduate level ............................................. 14
Extension of Tier 4 student visas due to Covid-19 .......................................................... 15
Universities in receipt of funds from the Chinese government ....................................... 15
Spend on higher education in the last 10 years ............................................................... 15
Student Loans Company annual performance and resource agreement letter ........... 16
Student Loans Company annual performance and resource agreement process ....... 16
Reforming the financing of health professionals’ education .......................................... 16

**Sector News** .................................................................................................................. 17  
Gavin Williamson written statement on Higher Technical Education Reform ............ 17
Draft Tertiary Education and Research Bill consultation .............................................. 17
Higher Education restructuring regime ........................................................................ 18
Parliamentary Business

Education Committee session with Universities Minister

On Wednesday 15 July at 10:15am, the Education Committee held an ‘Accountability hearing’ with Michelle Donelan MP, Minister of State for Universities, Department for Education.

The session covered a wide range of higher education issues, but focused largely on social mobility, degree apprenticeships and part-time learning.

The Minister repeatedly stressed that social mobility should not be measured by the number of disadvantaged pupils getting into a university, but instead their attainment and outcomes. She stressed that ensuring “quality provision that unlocks opportunities” was the Department for Education’s priority.

She denied that some universities were over reliant on international student fees, but did think the Covid-19 pandemic presented an opportunity for universities to innovate and diversify their income streams. The Minister also confirmed that details of the restructuring regime would be published in the imminent future.

Other topics of discussion included student mental health, online provision, senior pay and freedom of speech.

The full session can be watched here.

Forthcoming business

BEIS oral questions

On Tuesday 21 July, BEIS ministers will answer questions from the floor of the house.

Daniel Zeichner MP and Barry Sheerman MP have tabled questions on research and development.

You can watch the debate here.

Lords debate on social mobility

On Tuesday 21 July, the House of Lords will hold a debate on the ‘Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on social mobility’.

You can watch this debate here.

Lords debate teaching arts and creative subjects during Covid-19

On Wednesday 22 July the House of Lords will hold a debate on ‘Teaching of arts and other creative subjects online and in classrooms, as COVID-19 restrictions are lifted’.

You can watch the debate here.
Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination Bill second reading

On Wednesday 22 July 2020 the Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill will have its second reading in the House of Lords.

You can watch this debate here.

Lords debate on tuition fees and debt of nursing, midwifery and allied healthcare students

On Thursday 23 July 2020 the House of Lords will debate ‘Plans to reimburse tuition fees and forgive any current debt, for any current nursing, midwifery and allied healthcare students who are employed by the NHS’

You can watch this debate here.

Written Questions

Tuition fees and grants for nursing, midwifery and allied healthcare students

Zarah Sultana (Coventry South): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the current system of tuition fees and maintenance grants for (a) nursing, (b midwifery and (c) allied healthcare students. [67793]

Michelle Donelan (Chippenham): The current system for funding tuition fees for nursing, midwifery and allied health professional students has enabled us to open up the number of training places that universities can offer in these professions and to increase the amount of living costs support available.

From September 2020, eligible new and continuing nursing, midwifery and many allied health professional students on pre-registration courses at English universities will also receive an additional new non-repayable grant of £5,000 to contribute to their living costs. Funding up to a further £3,000 is also available for students who choose to study in an area or a specialism that is struggling to recruit students or for helping students with childcare costs. This funding is in addition to the support that students can already access through the student loans system and the existing learning support fund, which includes funding for childcare, travel and exceptional hardship.

The government has also recently announced that the maximum loan for living costs will be increased by 2.9% for the 2020/21 academic year. It will be up to £9,203 for eligible full-time undergraduate students living away from home and studying outside London (loan amounts are higher in London).

Maximum tuition fees for undergraduate courses, and the subsidised fee loans available from the government to pay them, will remain at £9,250 for a standard full-time undergraduate course in the 2020/21 academic year. This is the third year in succession maximum fees have been frozen.

Loans for tuition fees and living costs only need to be repaid from the statutory repayment date. For most undergraduate students, the statutory repayment date is the April after students finish their course. Monthly repayments are linked to income, not to interest rates or the amount borrowed. Repayments, which are calculated at 9%, are only on amounts earned over the repayment threshold, which is currently annually £26,575. Borrowers are protected, as their repayments decrease if their income decreases, with outstanding debt written off after 30 years.
Furloughing university employees on zero hours contracts

Dame Diana Johnson (Kingston upon Hull North): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what guidance his Department has published for universities on furloughing employees on zero hours contracts during the covid-19 outbreak. [68299]

Michelle Donelan (Chippenham): During and after the COVID-19 outbreak, our aim is for higher education (HE) providers to continue to deliver HE provision and to support the needs of staff and students, both on-campus and off-campus.

The department issued guidance on 17 April for HE providers so that they are aware of the support available to them and can apply for it. The guidance is available here.

This guidance confirms that HE providers can access the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to help safeguard staff jobs. The linked guidance from Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs confirms that employers can claim for employees on any type of employment contract, including full-time, part-time, agency, flexible or zero-hour contracts.

In developing this guidance, the department worked with trade unions as well as Universities UK and the Universities and Colleges Employers Association. We continue to work with the sector to provide further clarification as necessary to help providers understand how they can access the range of measures on offer.

Access to education for disabled people during Covid-19

Sarah Olney (Richmond Park): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to ensure that disabled people have access to education in a safe environment during the covid-19 outbreak. [68403]

Vicky Ford (Chelmsford): Supporting all children and young people and keeping them safe is the highest priority for the government, especially at this time. That is why, throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, educational settings have been asked to ensure that children and young people with education, health and care (EHC) plans can continue to attend where appropriate and, following a risk assessment, where their needs can be safely met in the educational environment.

Returning to normal educational routines as quickly as possible will be critical for children and young people’s education and wellbeing. From 1 June, we asked special educational settings to welcome back as many children and young people as could be safely catered for in their setting, based on their risk assessment as the primary deciding factor. In mainstream settings, we asked that children and young people with EHC plans in eligible year groups experience the same return to settings as their peers without EHC plans in the same year group, informed by their risk assessments. However, the prevalence of COVID-19 has decreased and the balance of risk is now overwhelmingly in favour of all children and young people, including those with special educational needs and disability (SEND), returning to their educational setting so that they can receive high-quality teaching and specialist professional care.

On 2 July, the government published detailed plans for schools and colleges that set out what is needed to plan for a full return of their pupils and students in September, including for special education settings. We have also updated the guidance for higher education providers on reopening university campuses. The guidance has been developed with medical experts from Public Health England and we continue to work closely with the country’s best scientific and medical experts to ensure that children, young people and staff are as safe as possible. The guidance provides specific advice on approaches for reducing the risk of transmission as well as other operational considerations for educational settings.
to follow as they prepare for welcoming back all pupils and students with SEND in both mainstream and specialist settings.

The guidance for special educational settings can be found here.

The guidance for mainstream settings is available here.

The guidance for further education settings is available here.

The guidance for higher education settings is available here.

We will continue to work closely with special education settings, parents and carers, local authorities and other partner organisations ahead of September. For instance, we know that specific transport arrangements for children and young people with SEND will be critical. We will publish guidance for local authorities who provide dedicated school transport shortly.

**Insolvency**

**Afzal Khan (Manchester, Gorton):** To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department has taken to help prevent universities from becoming insolvent as a result of the covid-19 pandemic. [61577]

**Michelle Donelan (Chippenham):** The government recognises that the COVID-19 outbreak is bringing significant financial challenges to the higher education (HE) sector and we have been working closely with the sector to monitor the likely impacts.

On 4 May 2020, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, announced a package of measures to ensure sustainability in HE at a time of unprecedented uncertainty.

We have stabilised the admissions system and will pull forward tuition fee payments, expected to be worth £2.6 billion, for providers so that they receive more money in the first term of the 2020/21 academic year. This will have no impact on students but will allow providers to better manage financial risks over the autumn. This will be available to all providers across the UK. In reprofiling these payments, we are clear in our expectation that providers should use the cashflow benefits appropriately, taking significant steps to improve efficiencies and manage their finances in order to avoid cashflow problems in the future. Reprofiling in this way is a one-off intervention for the autumn term only, to help providers take all necessary steps now to prepare for the future.

On 27 June, the government announced a further package of support to research-active universities to enable them to continue their research and innovation activities. This includes £280 million of government funding, and a package of low-interest loans with long pay-back periods, supplemented by a small amount of government grants, which will be available from autumn. In sharing responsibility for the future of science and research with our world-leading university system, the government will cover up to 80% of a university’s income losses from international students for the academic year 2020/21, up to the value of their non-publicly funded research activity.

The government has also confirmed that providers are eligible to apply for its support packages, including business loan support schemes, which the Office for Students (OfS) the regulator in England, estimates could be worth at least £700 million to the sector.

The department is working closely with HM Treasury and other government departments to develop a restructuring regime for HE providers in England. We will only intervene where we find there is a case to do so and only where we believe intervention is possible and appropriate, and as a last resort. A restructuring regime will review providers’ circumstances and assess the need for restructuring, financial support and any attached conditions. We are discussing our approach with the devolved administrations.
Financial support for universities

Afzal Khan (Manchester, Gorton): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to provide additional financial support to universities to supplement any shortfall in funding as a result of declining student numbers in the 2020/21 academic year. [61579]

Michelle Donelan (Chippenham): The government recognises that the COVID-19 outbreak is bringing significant financial challenges to the higher education (HE) sector and we have been working closely with the sector to monitor the likely impacts.

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Immigration offenders removed who arrived to UK on student visas

Sir John Hayes (South Holland and The Deepings): To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many immigration offenders, excluding failed asylum seekers and foreign national offenders, have been removed in each of the last five years for which figures are available; and how many of those first arrived in the UK on a student visa. [68277]

The number of Returns (of which deportations are a subset) are published in table Ret_D01 of the Returns detailed datasets (https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/returns-and-detention-datasets).

The term 'deportations' refers to a legally-defined subset of returns which are enforced either following a criminal conviction or when it is judged that a person’s removal from the UK is conducive to the public good. Information on those deported is not separately available and therefore the published statistics refer to all enforced returns.

Please note that only some of those returned will have previously entered the UK illegally; others may have entered legally, for example those who enter on a visa and overstay their period of valid leave and are therefore not separately identifiable in the data.

Information on the number of individuals returned who first arrived in the UK on a student visa would require a manual check of individual records which could only be done at disproportionate cost.

Sir John Hayes (South Holland and The Deepings): To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many people who originally entered the UK on a study visa were part of the post 2008 migration refusal pool in the third quarter of 2019. [67531]

Chris Philp (Croydon South): We do not routinely publish the information you have requested, we are unable to provide this information, as it could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Sir John Hayes (South Holland and The Deepings): To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many immigration offenders excluding failed asylum seekers and foreign national offenders have been removed from the UK in each of the last five years for which figures are available; and how many of those so removed first arrived in the UK on a student visa. [67535]


The term ‘deportations’ refers to a legally-defined subset of returns which are enforced either following a criminal conviction or when it is judged that a person’s removal from the UK is conducive to the public good. Information on those deported is not separately available and therefore the published statistics refer to all enforced returns.

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Information on the number of individuals returned who first arrived in the UK on a student visa would require a manual check of individual records which could only be done at disproportionate cost.

Qualification for home fee status

Simon Baynes (Clwyd South): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the effect on the numbers of overseas students of the difference in tuition fees for British nationals living in Britain and those who have lived overseas for longer than three years. [70523]
Michelle Donelan (Chippenham): To qualify for home fee status in England, a person must have settled status or a recognised connection to the United Kingdom and meet the relevant ordinary residence requirements. Most persons must have been ordinarily resident in the United Kingdom and Islands or, in some cases, the European Economic Area or Switzerland for the 3 years prior to the first day of the first academic year of their course, excluding periods of temporary absence.

No assessment has been made of the number of British nationals who do not qualify for home fee status in England by virtue of their residence.

International student recruitment

Emma Hardy (Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, with reference to the recent decision of the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement that international students offered only online university courses in that country must leave the US, whether he plans to take steps to encourage international students to study in the UK. [70486]

Michelle Donelan (Chippenham): The government has been clear that our world-leading universities, which thrive on being global institutions, will always be open to international students. Engaging closely with the devolved administrations and the higher education sector, we are working to reassure prospective international students that UK higher education is 'open for business', remains-world class and is a safe place to study. This includes continued work with Study UK (the government’s international student recruitment campaign led by the British Council), support for the sector-led #WeAreTogether campaign and a package of bespoke communications that will directly target prospective international students, making clear our world-leading offer.

We are also taking steps to promote the new graduate route, which will provide a non-extendable period of leave to stay and work in the UK at any skill level. The government announced on 1 July, as part of the new graduate route, that international students who complete a PhD from summer 2021 can stay in the UK for 3 years after study to live and work. Students who have successfully completed undergraduate and master’s degrees will be able to stay for 2 years. This represents a significant improvement in our offer to international students and will help ensure our higher education sector remains competitive internationally.

Furthermore, on 22 June, with my counterparts in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales, I wrote to prospective international students to outline the support and guidance available to international students who are considering studying in the UK from the autumn: https://study-uk.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/letter_to_prospective_international_students.pdf. This letter reiterates a number of flexibilities that the government has already announced for international students including, amongst other mitigations, confirmation that distance/blended learning will be permitted for the 2020/21 academic year provided that international students’ sponsors intend to transition to face-to-face learning as soon as circumstances allow, and that international students present in the UK before 6 April 2021 will be eligible for the graduate route if they meet the other requirements of the route when it is introduced in summer 2021.

Guidance published on 24 March provides a temporary work-around for students who need to undertake distance learning due to the COVID-19 outbreak. This is reiterated in guidance for short-term and Tier 4 students updated on 1 June found here.

The government is also in discussions with Universities UK and other sector representatives on a regular basis to ensure we are united in welcoming international students to the UK. In particular, we expect international students to be appropriately supported upon arrival by their chosen university during these unprecedented times – especially those who will be subject to the 14-day self-isolation period.

The UK’s new International Education Champion, Sir Steve Smith, will assist with opening up export growth opportunities for the whole UK education sector, which will include attracting international students to UK universities. Alongside Sir Steve’s appointment, our review of the International Education Strategy this autumn will respond to the new context and the challenges posed by COVID-
19 across all education settings to ensure we can continue to welcome international students in the future.

**Research and development funding**

**Chi Onwurah (Newcastle upon Tyne Central):** To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what proportion of the research and development funding that does not go through UK Research and Innovation is allocated to universities. [68694]

**Amanda Solloway (Derby North):** Information on the scale and sources of research grant income secured by universities is available from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). This data is collected on an annual basis from higher education providers and is available at https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/finances/income. Data for each of the last three years is provided in the table below:

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*The Royal Society, British Academy and The Royal Society of Edinburgh

In 2018-19, UKRI accounted for ca 70% of public funding for research from UK sources.

**Charity contribution to research and development funding**

**Chi Onwurah (Newcastle upon Tyne Central):** To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what estimate he has made of the contribution of UK charities to UK university research and development in each of the last three years. [68695]

**Amanda Solloway (Derby North):** Information on the scale and sources of research grant income secured by universities is available from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). This data is collected on an annual basis from higher education providers and is available here. Data for each of the last three years is provided in the table below:

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In 2018-19, UKRI accounted for ca 70% of public funding for research from UK sources.

**Funding to research departments at universities not in receipt of a TEF award**

**Chi Onwurah (Newcastle upon Tyne Central):** To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, whether he plans to allocate additional funding to research departments at universities that are not in receipt of a teaching excellence framework award. [68700]

**Amanda Solloway (Derby North):** Research funding allocations to universities from Research England are based primarily on the performance of their research departments under the Research Excellence Framework while project funding is allocated through competition, for example from the Research Councils. Research allocations are made irrespective of whether the university has been assessed through the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcome Framework.

From the Autumn, Government will provide research-active higher education providers across the UK with a package of support to sustain research capacity which is at risk from income losses due to COVID-19, consisting of low-interest loans with long pay-back periods, supplemented by a small amount of government grants. This will cover up to 80% of a university’s income losses from international students for the academic year 20/21, up to the value of their non-publicly funded research activity. In order to be eligible, the provider in England must be an “Approved (Fee Cap)” provider registered with the Office for Students and already in receipt of Research England funding.

**Student number controls - Scotland**

**Mhairi Black (Paisley and Renfrewshire South):** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, what discussions he has had with Scottish universities on the Government’s 4 May 2020 announcement on student number controls. [70432]

**Mr Alister Jack (Dumfries and Galloway):** Funding decisions affecting students who live in England are for the Department of Education to determine, however Scotland Office Ministers and officials have had a number of discussions with Universities Scotland on this matter.

In those discussions we have reiterated the point that the Scottish Government has a responsibility to ensure that the university sector in Scotland is properly funded.

**Mhairi Black (Paisley and Renfrewshire South):** To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he made an assessment of the implications for Scottish universities of his policy on student number controls announced on 4 May 2020. [70430]
Michelle Donelan (Chippenham): My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Education, and I have regular meetings with Scottish ministers, and ministers from all the devolved administrations, about higher education issues. These discussions have included the development of student number controls policy. Departmental officials also have regular meetings and discussions with their counterparts.

Student number controls are a direct response to COVID-19. They are designed to minimise the impact to the financial threat posed by the outbreak and form a key part of the package of measures to stabilise the admissions system. We want to make sure that university places are available to all who are qualified by ability and attainment to pursue them and who wish to do so.

These controls are a temporary measure and will be in place for one academic year only. Student number controls for institutions in the devolved administrations only apply to the number of English-domiciled entrants who will be supported with their tuition fees through the Student Loans Company, and are set at a level which will allow every institution to take more first year English students than they took last year. The funding of English-domiciled students is not a devolved matter, and it is right and fair that this policy should apply as consistently as possible wherever they are studying in the UK.

Ministers will continue to work closely with the devolved administrations on strengthening and stabilising the higher education system following the COVID-19 outbreak.

Financial support for charity-funded PhD students

Chi Onwurah (Newcastle upon Tyne Central): To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what financial support there is to cover the costed extensions to stipends of charity-funded PhD students. [69545]

Amanda Solloway (Derby North): The Government recognises that there are significant pressures on PhD students and on charities as a result of the impact of COVID-19.
This impact includes a loss of income for charities, which is why the Government has pledged £750 million to ensure Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprises, including medical research charities, can continue their vital work in supporting the country during the coronavirus outbreak.

Furthermore, on 27 June the Government also announced 2 support packages to protect research jobs and ground-breaking research projects impacted by coronavirus. Firstly, around £280 million of government funding has been made available to universities impacted by coronavirus that will fund extensions to grants and support researchers’ salaries. Secondly, from this autumn UK universities will be able to access a series of government grants and long-term low-interest loans covering up to 80% of their income losses caused by an expected decline in international students, to ensure that crucial research can continue. As part of these packages, we will be asking universities to consider how they can support charity-funded research, including the PhD students involved, through this funding.

Charities and higher education providers can also access cross-cutting government support schemes, including the Business Interruption Loan Schemes and the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

While charities and higher education providers are independent organisations and are responsible for their own decisions on funding, the Government is continuing to work with the sector, including with the Association of Medical Research Charities, to understand the impacts of COVID-19.

No detriment policies

Lord Storey: To ask Her Majesty’s Government what assessment they have made of the ‘no detriment’ policies adopted by some universities as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. [HL6420]

Lord Parkinson Of Whitley Bay: Notwithstanding the disruption of the COVID-19 outbreak to the higher education sector, students deserve appropriate support and recognition for their hard work and dedication. Many universities and colleges have moved adeptly to develop new ways of delivering courses through online teaching and alternatives to their usual end-of-course exams.

As higher education providers are autonomous institutions, they are responsible for determining the way their courses are taught, supervised, and assessed. The government expects providers to make all reasonable efforts for student achievement to be reliably assessed and for qualifications to be awarded appropriately. The Office for Students (OfS), the higher education regulator in England, has issued guidance to the sector that sets out expectations about providers’ approaches to teaching and assessment during this time.

Some universities have put in place policies stating that students should not be awarded a degree classification below their level of academic performance prior to the COVID-19 outbreak. This is intended by providers as a safety net for students to ensure that they are not unfairly affected by these challenging circumstances.

The guidance from the OfS is clear that standards must be maintained but that changes to assessments may be required in some circumstances. If changes are needed, students’ achievements must be ‘reliably assessed’. If a provider is absolutely confident that they already have enough evidence to make a reliable assessment of a student’s achievements, it will sometimes be appropriate to use that evidence to award and classify a degree award.

More often, however, we expect that providers will need to continue with assessment and follow the OfS’s guidance on the practical next steps. It may not be appropriate to operate a ‘no detriment’ approach for all courses if, for example, essential pieces of assessment cannot be completed.

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education has also published a series of guides and information to support providers to maintain academic standards and to support student achievement during the COVID-19 outbreak. This includes a paper published in April, attached, which provides an overview of what ‘no detriment’ policies aim to achieve. The paper also provides an overview of some
of the measures that providers can put in place to ensure that the academic standards of awards remain robust while also recognising the challenging circumstances for students.

We expect providers to develop solutions appropriate to each course, considering the needs of individual students. We also expect them to ensure that continuing and prospective students receive the clear, accurate, and timely information they need to make informed decisions. If students have concerns, there is a process in place. They should first raise their concerns with their university; if their concerns remain unresolved, students at providers in England or Wales can ask the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education to consider their complaint.

Attainment level of children in care at undergraduate level

Jon Trickett (Hemsworth): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment has he made of the trends in the level educational attainment of children in care at (a) GCSE, (b) A level or equivalent and (c) undergraduate degree level. [70311]

Vicky Ford (Chelmsford): Children in care generally have lower educational attainment than other pupils.

63% of looked-after children enter care due to abuse or neglect. They often have a disrupted experience of education and this pre-care experience can have a significant impact on their attainment. Looked-after children are almost four times more likely to have a special educational need (SEN) than all children and this in part can also explain the gap in attainment compared to non-looked after children.

We expect looked-after children to be placed in good or outstanding schools. Schools must appoint a designated teacher for looked-after children and local authorities must have a Virtual School Head who is accountable for the educational attainment of all children looked-after by the local authority. We have introduced the pupil premium plus for looked-after children (£2,345 per eligible pupil and is managed by the Virtual School Head) to deliver the outcomes in each looked-after child’s personal education plan. The department’s exclusions statutory guidance is clear that the headteacher should, as far as possible, avoid permanently excluding a looked after child. The rate of permanent exclusion for looked after children was 0.14% in 2014–15. That has reduced in recent years; in 2017-2018, the rate was 0.05%. The local authority must have regard to the relevant statutory guidance when carrying out its duties in relation to the education of looked after children.

Information on the performance of children who had been looked after continuously for at least 12 months at Key Stage 4 is published in a statistical release. Due to the introduction of reformed GCSEs and the 9-1 grading scale, comparisons over a long timeframe are difficult. Table 5a shows that the percentage of children who had been looked after continuously for at least 12 months achieving the threshold in English and mathematics at grade 5 or above decreased slightly from 7.4% in 2017 to 7.2% in 2019. The publication is available here.

Equivalent figures are not available for A levels as we do not match data collected for looked-after children with Key Stage 5 attainment data on the national pupil database.

Information on the degree qualifications of children who have been looked after is not held centrally within the department.

The Office for Students published a report that looked at the effects of different characteristics on students’ degree attainment. Annex B describes how care-experienced students have lower rates of achieving a first or upper-second class degree when compared to students who have not been in care. For qualifiers in 2018-19, the attainment rate of care experienced students was 12.1% lower than the attainment rate of students who have not been in care. The report is available here.

Since 2018, we have been working with universities to encourage them to sign up to the Care Leaver Covenant and publish their offer to care leavers. The website is available here.
We continue to work with the sector to better understand the needs of care leavers and increase their attendance and attainment.

**Extension of Tier 4 student visas due to Covid-19**

**Carol Monaghan (Glasgow North West):** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of granting a further extension for people on a Tier 4 General Student visa due to the covid-19 pandemic. [72227]

**Kevin Foster (Torbay):** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of granting a further extension for people on a temporary visa due to the covid-19 pandemic, particularly where those people have underlying health conditions that may make international travel more hazardous. 72226

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if she will make an assessment of the potential merits of granting a further extension for people on a Tier 4 General Student visa due to the covid-19 pandemic.

**Universities in receipt of funds from the Chinese government**

**Tim Loughton (East Worthing and Shoreham):** To ask the Secretary of State for Education, which (a) schools and (b) higher education establishments (i) host a Confucius Institute and (ii) are in receipt of funds from the Chinese Government. [72747]

**Michelle Donelan (Chippenham):** Higher education establishments are independent, autonomous organisations and the government does not collect data of this sort. A number of UK higher education providers host and publicise their Confucius Institutes and are responsible for ensuring their partnerships are managed appropriately with the right due diligence in place.

The government does not collect data on which education establishments host a Confucius institute.

**Spend on higher education in the last 10 years**

**Neil O'Brien (Harborough):** To ask the Secretary of State for Education, after accounting for changes to the classification of student loans, how much (a) was spent on higher education in each of the last 10 years and (b) has been allocated in each year of the forecast period. [70489]

**Michelle Donelan (Chippenham):** Higher education spending is reflected in the national accounts in different ways. Net spending by government on higher education over the year contributes to Public Sector Net Borrowing (PSNB), also known as the deficit.

Grants to students and providers are government spending and increase the deficit. The recent classification decision by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) changed the way that student loans contribute to the deficit. Under the reclassification, the part of the maintenance and tuition loan which is not expected to be repaid is considered spending and increases the deficit. Any accruing interest which is expected to be repaid is considered as income, decreasing the deficit. The difference between spending on loans which are not expected to be repaid and expected interest income represents the net spending by the government on student loans over the year.

More detail on the reclassification by the ONS can be found here.
A table summarising the total deficit cost of higher education is attached. Figures are not yet available for the 2019/20 academic year.

Historic information on student loans is published by the Student Loans Company and available here.

The Office for Students (OfS) is responsible for distributing funding to the sector on behalf of the department. Details of future teaching grant allocation budgets from the department to the OfS are published here.

The Office for Budget Responsibility publishes the forecast impact of student loans on PSNB. This is available in table 3.24 of the ‘March 2020 Economic and Fiscal Outlook’ found here. These figures include student loans funded by the devolved administrations and the department.

Student Loans Company annual performance and resource agreement letter

Emma Hardy (Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will publish the most recent Annual Performance and Resource Agreement Letter from the Government to the Student Loans Company. [73061]

Michelle Donelan (Chippenham): The department has issued the Annual Performance and Resource Agreement to the Student Loans Company (SLC), however there was a delay in issuing it this year due to the impact of COVID-19. The Annual Performance and Resource Agreement will be published by the SLC later in the year.

The department does not publish the Ministerial letter, however the SLC’s ‘Corporate Strategy 2019-20 to 2021-22’ (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/corporate-strategy) sets out the medium-term direction and strategy in line with shareholders’ priorities.

Student Loans Company annual performance and resource agreement process

Emma Hardy (Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will publish the most recent Ministerial letter from his Department to the Chair of the Student Loans Company sent as part of the Annual Performance and Resource Agreement process. [73062]

Michelle Donelan (Chippenham): The department has issued the Annual Performance and Resource Agreement to the Student Loans Company (SLC), however there was a delay in issuing it this year due to the impact of COVID-19. The Annual Performance and Resource Agreement will be published by the SLC later in the year.

The department does not publish the Ministerial letter, however the SLC’s ‘Corporate Strategy 2019-20 to 2021-22’ (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/corporate-strategy) sets out the medium-term direction and strategy in line with shareholders’ priorities.

Reforming the financing of health professionals’ education

Sarah Owen (Luton North): To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of reforming the financing of health professionals’ education. [64359]
Helen Whately (Faversham and Mid Kent): The Government keeps the funding arrangements for all pre-registration undergraduate and postgraduate National Health Service health professionals’ education under close review, to ensure that students are appropriately supported.

In 2017 pre-registration nursing, midwifery and allied health profession students became eligible for tuition fee and maintenance loans, receiving at least 25% more funding for living costs support than under the previous system. The Government introduced the Learning Support Fund which provides a child dependants allowance, reimbursement of all additional travel costs to attend clinical placements and an exceptional hardship fund.

From September 2020, all eligible new and continuing pre-registration nursing, midwifery and most allied health profession students studying at English universities would benefit from a new, non-repayable, training grant of at least £5,000 per academic year in addition to the funding available already through the Learning Support Fund.

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**Sector News**

**Gavin Williamson written statement on Higher Technical Education Reform**

On Tuesday 14 July, Gavin Williamson published a written statement on Higher Technical Education Reform.

The department is introducing newly approved higher technical qualifications from September 2022 supported by a government-backed brand and quality mark. Qualifications will only be approved where they provide the skills employers need. The government will work with Ofsted and the Office for Students to make sure the quality of courses is consistently high across HE and FE institutions.

Working in partnership with employers and careers advisers, they will launch a new public awareness campaign to showcase the benefits and the wide range of opportunities that studying a higher technical qualification can open up and making sure students get the right information, advice and guidance to make informed choices.

You can read the full written statement [here](#).

**Draft Tertiary Education and Research Bill consultation**

On Tuesday 14 June, Welsh education minister Kirsty Williams launched a consultation on the Draft Tertiary Education and Research Bill.

The Draft Bill proposes the establishment of the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (CTER), a new Welsh Government sponsored body. It also proposes the dissolution of the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW). The Commission is intended to be established in 2023 and will have a Board and a Chief Executive. Its Board will include advisory members as representatives of students and learners, tertiary education practitioners, and the Commission’s own staff.

The Welsh Government will be required to publish a statement for tertiary education, training and research in Wales. The Commission will then produce a strategic plan, following consultation with stakeholders, which will set out how it will deliver on these priorities.

The consultation closes on 4 December 2020.
Higher Education restructuring regime

On Thursday 16 July, the Department for Education published a policy paper on the ‘higher education restructuring regime’.

The document outlines the higher education restructuring regime for higher education providers in England who are at risk of insolvency as a result of coronavirus (COVID-19).

The scheme will review providers’ circumstances and assess the case for restructuring support, including last resort financial support through repayable loans. As a condition for taking part in the scheme, universities will be required to make changes that meet wider government objectives, depending on the individual provider’s circumstances.

A Higher Education Restructuring Regime Board will be established, with an independent chair, which will include input from members with specialist knowledge external to government. The Education Secretary will draw on the expertise of the Board on individual cases before making a decision on whether to intervene.

Further details on the regime, including support and conditions can be found here.