

King's Speech: UUK Briefing

Spring 2026

Contents

The King's Speech explained	2
Education measures announced	3
Other measures announced	4
Other measures announced - continued	6
Measures not announced	7
What happens next?	8

The King's Speech explained

On Wednesday 13 May 2026, the King delivered the 'King's Speech' at the State Opening of Parliament.

Each session of Parliament begins with the State Opening of Parliament. This includes the King's (or Queen's) Speech which outlines legislation the Government intends to introduce in the following session. Despite its name, the speech is written by the government and approved by Cabinet, and it is delivered by the Monarch from the throne in the House of Lords.

A King's Speech is important because it is a test of a government's ability to command the confidence of the Commons. For Government's with large majorities, the King's Speech is unlikely to cause any headaches, however, for governments with only narrow majorities or who are governing as minorities, it can be more of a challenge.

While the current Labour Government does have a large majority, there is no doubt that considerable questions will be raised as to the Government's ability to deliver on the King's Speech given mounting speculation about the Prime Minister's future. Plenty of commentary suggests that the King's Speech could have been bolder and gone further, to meet the demands of a frustrated electorate.



HM King Charles III delivers his speech, alongside Queen Camilla, at the State Opening of Parliament in 2024.

Education measures announced

There was a clear focus in this King's Speech on the tense geopolitical landscape, alongside the ongoing cost of living crisis and the government's broader focus on children's wellbeing. In this context, higher education did not feature within the King's Speech.

The post-16 education and skills white paper published in October 2025 included several measures which will need legislation. While we weren't expecting these measures to make an appearance this time around, we will continue to push for legislation on areas such as the automation of tuition fees to be expedited.

Nonetheless, significant education announcements were included in the King's Speech and may be of interest to universities.

Education for All Bill

The 'Education for All' Bill aims to raise standards and enact reform to the Special Education Needs & Disability (SEND) system. Measures announced are wide ranging, stretching across both the primary and secondary education systems, including:

- Providing early support to Children with SEND by legislating to require settings to produce an individual support plan for every child and young person with SEND.
- Enabling local support by making mainstream settings more inclusive. The Bill will ensure more children and young people receive the right support early on, by delivering more training on SEND and inclusion than ever before.
- Improving fairness across the system by funding schools on a fair and consistent basis, wherever they are in the country, and requiring schools to pool a portion of their funding for SEND.
- Ending the postcode lottery for children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).
- Using partnerships and ensuring that support is shared across settings.

Other measures announced

In addition to the bills listed above, bills concerning asylum and immigration, the removal of peerages, regulation and modernisation of the NHS were also announced.

We have highlighted measures below that we believe may be of relevance to the higher education sector. Please note, this list is not exhaustive, and you can read the full list of measures at [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)

Tackling State Threats Bill

The Tackling State Threats Bill aims to tackle the growing threat from foreign state entities and their proxies. Key measures to feature in the Bill:

- To allow the Secretary of State to specify organisations, including state entities or their proxies, that are engaged in activity to threaten our national security, including espionage, sabotage and interference.
- The Bill will create new criminal offences to disrupt specified groups operating in the UK. These offences would capture conduct such as belonging to an organisation or raising support.
- Offences in the National Security Act 2023 will apply to the organisations, making it easier to bring prosecutions against individuals who are working for specified proxy organisations, such as front companies and organised groups.

National Security Bill

This Bill seeks to criminalise the creation and sharing of the most harmful violent material and to stop the spread of content that glorifies, trivialises, or normalises serious violence. The Bill will take a proportionate approach that protects freedom of expression and legitimate public-interest activity while ensuring that those who create, share, or use extreme violence content to encourage or glorify violence can be held to account.

Immigration and Asylum Bill

The Immigration and Asylum Bill aims to ‘increase [the public’s] confidence in the security of the immigration and asylum systems’. The Bill is wide ranging and covers a number of elements including, the removal and deportation of illegal immigrants, foreign criminals, as well restoring border control. Includes:

- The creation of a new independent appeals body. It will be staffed by professionally trained adjudicators and, while decisions will be fully

- independent, the new body will be integrated into the end-to-end immigration system to ensure cases flow through quickly to removal where appeals are unsuccessful.
- Tightening the application of Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights to prevent exploitation of the system and ensure that the public interest carries proper weight in immigration decisions.
- Defining the term 'family life', to ensure that family is limited to a core family unit, such as spouses, parents, and children, to prevent dubious legal challenges on the grounds of family life.

Removal of Peerages Bill

The Removal of Peerages Bill aims to allow the removal of peerages from disgraced individuals following the fall-out from the Peter Mandelson scandal.

The Bill will create a mechanism for removing peerages from disgraced peers, without the need to introduce bespoke legislation for every individual case.

Public Office (Accountability) Bill

The Public Office (Accountability) Bill will introduce a duty of candour for public servants in England and Wales.

The Regulation of Growth Bill

The Regulating for Growth Bill aims to ensure that regulation doesn't block innovation. This will include creating new statutory power for ministers to issue strategic steers, enabling them to define what growth means in different regulatory contexts. There is also an intention to allow experimentation in relation to fast-growing technologies.

NHS Modernisation Bill

The NHS Modernisation Bill aims to improve care for patients through investment and modernisation, including:

- Build the Single Patient Record.
- Abolish NHS England and transfer duties into Department for Health and Social Care.
- Strengthening local democratic accountability in health systems
- Reforming Integrated Care Boards (ICBs).

Other measures announced - continued

- **Railways and Passenger Benefits Bill**, establishing Great British Railways.
- **Overnight Visitor Levy Bill**, which devolves revenue raising powers in the form of a local tourist tax.
- **Representation of the People Bill** which includes moving the voting age to 16.
- **Courts Modernisation Bill** to overhaul the criminal justice system by limiting jury trials, expanding magistrates' powers, and introducing judge-only cases to speed up proceedings and cut backlogs.
- **Energy Independence Bill** which aims to accelerate homegrown clean energy, modernise the grid and cut reliance on imported fossil fuels to strengthen UK energy security.

Measures not announced

The King's Speech did not include the following measures, but members should be aware that they could still be introduced.

The Introduction of a Complaint System run by Office for Students (OfS)

In April 2026, the Government announced that it would make regulations in June 2026 to introduce a complaints system to be run by the OfS. This would operate from the beginning of the 2026–27 academic year for university staff, external speakers and non-student members 'to raise concerns about providers who fail to protect freedom of speech'. The Government has previously stated that it is "seeking a suitable legislative vehicle to amend and repeal elements of the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023 at the earliest opportunity'.

Universities UK (UUK) has concerns that the timeline set out by the Government is ambitious given the need for the OfS to publish fresh guidance and instructions to universities, ahead of the complaint systems being established.

International Student Levy

During the Autumn Budget in 2025, the Government confirmed the creation of a levy on higher education provider's income from international students. The government stated that it 'would establish a levy of £925 per student per year of study, starting in August 2028 for the 2028–29 academic year. Legislation to enact the levy could still come forward later in Autumn 2026. UUK opposed the introduction of the levy, and our key legislative concern would be enacting of this levy ahead of the legislation needed to bring in the domestic tuition fee "escalator" which would automate annual increases and allow universities to plan for the longer term.

Further Education and apprenticeships

The education of 16-19 year olds and the introduction of V levels was not mentioned in the King's Speech. The speech did speak of addressing the 'lack of respect' for vocational qualifications and mentioned investment in apprenticeships.

What happens next?

Following the King's Speech, the debate begins, where MPs and Lords discuss the Government's legislative agenda and respond to the speech.

Debate over the King's Speech in the Commons tends to take place over six sitting days, with each day's debate centring around a broad theme. Conventionally, the Leader of the Opposition plays a key role in influencing the themes for each day. Confusingly, whilst days are listed by themes, Bills do not have to be debated on these days.

UUK will be briefing parliamentarians as they prepare to participate in these debates, to raise the need for government to recognise the considerable contribution made by universities to delivering its proposed agenda.

Following the six sitting days of debate, the King's Speech is then voted on. In theory, the King's Speech can be voted down, however, this would be of major political significance, as it would clearly call into question the ability of the Government to command the confidence of Parliament.

At the time of writing, the current political situation remains turbulent following the calls from both backbenchers and ministers for the Prime Minister to resign. It seems probable that measures in the King's Speech will be debated as planned but this is against what is an obviously an uncertain backdrop and tense political relations within the Labour Party.

Expected themes by days:

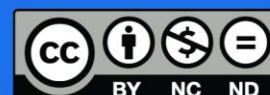
- **Day one – Wednesday 13 May**
- Debate on the address
- **Day two – Tuesday 14 May**
- Get Britain Working Again
- **Day three – Monday 18 May**
- Backing Business to Create Economic Growth
- **Day four – Tuesday 19 May**
- Energy Security
- **Day five – Wednesday 20 May**
- Defence Readiness

Universities UK (UUK) is the collective voice of the UK's universities, bringing them together to pursue a common cause: thriving universities, serving society.



Woburn House
20 Tavistock Square
London, WC1H 9HQ

☎ +44 (0)20 7419 4111
✉ info@universitiesuk.ac.uk
🖱 universitiesuk.ac.uk
✕ @ [@UniversitiesUK](https://twitter.com/UniversitiesUK)
in [/universities-uk](https://www.linkedin.com/company/universities-uk)



July 2021

ISBN: 978-1-84036-421-7