

## Thank you for your continued engagement with Universities UK over the last 12 months.

The Covid-19 crisis has been a dominant theme throughout 2020-21 with the unpredictable trajectory of the pandemic continuing to cause significant challenges for UUK members, their students and staff. Over the year, UUK has progressed multiple Covid-19 related workstreams achieving a range of outcomes for members.

Despite Covid-19, UUK has made significant progress across a wide range of other policy areas including issues relating to admissions reform, quality, research, regulation, funding, tackling harassment and international students. We have supported the sector through a seismic change – the UK's exit from the European Union – helping universities plan for a range of scenarios and securing continued participation in Horizon Europe as an associated country.

We have continued to engage more regularly than ever with members via multiple channels and our latest member survey found high levels of satisfaction and positive sentiment on UUK's value for money. The survey will be critical in informing our priorities, activities and actions for 2021-22 as the sector looks to maximise its role in the nation's post-pandemic recovery.

A full report on our work and achievements in 2020-21 will be included in our forthcoming annual report and accounts published in October. In the meantime, here is a summary of some of our headline achievements from the past year.

ALISTAIR JARVIS, CHIEF EXECUTIVE

# OUR WORK: 2020-21

## OUR COVID RESPONSE

Throughout the pandemic, UUK has organised and prioritised work focusing on gathering evidence and arguments from members and stakeholders, liaising with UK government departments, and coordinating efforts to secure support for institutions and students. Key outcomes include:

- Positively influenced decisions on a range of policy interventions including the start of the academic year and the return of students to campus following the winter lockdown
- Secured critical visa concessions including an extension to the date by which international students must be in the UK to apply for the Graduate route
- Progressed high-impact campaigns to promote universities' work and initiatives to support the national Coronavirus effort (#WeAreTogether) and to place universities at the heart of economic and social recovery post-pandemic (#GettingResults)
- Implemented a successful international confidence campaign (#WeAreTogether) to reassure prospective international students to continue with their plans to study at a UK university
- Developed resources to help universities support students affected by Covid-19 including a webinar series on student mental health, an updated self-isolation checklist, guidance on international student hardship and a briefing on student behaviours
- Secured extensive national media coverage across a range of Covid-related issues including student returns, testing, hardship, and financial sustainability
- Secured and shaped the detail of a range of government interventions on financial stability including access to a £2.4 billion package of support for research and innovation, steps to reduce home admissions volatility and measures to relieve cash-flow challenges
- Secured £85 million additional funding (England) to support students experiencing hardship
- Secured £13million funding within the NHS England/Improvement Mental Health Winter Plan to improve statutory mental health services for students
- Provided frequent updates to inform members of key developments [via fortnightly CEO Newsletters, a Covid Bulletin for planning and communications leads, 90+ email updates and 60 VC group calls] and regular opportunities for members to flag emerging issues requiring action
- Influenced government decisions on asymptomatic testing including the roll-out of asymptomatic testing sites and home testing initiatives in higher education providers
- Improved national and local outbreak response, tracing and support for those needing to self-isolate with particular focus on the relationship between universities and local public health
- Gathered compelling evidence (including via regular engagement with the ONS) to influence government policy on key Covid-19 issues from student hardship to student returns
- Obtained access to key influencers including Chief Medical Officer Professor Chris Whitty, Executive Chair of NHS Test and Trace Dido Harding and Chief Scientific Adviser, Sir Patrick Vallance
- Established a task and finish group to maximise the role of universities in the nation's economic and social recovery from Covid-19
- Worked with NHS England/Improvement to shape the roll-out of the mass vaccination programme to student populations in England including cross border issues
- Secured widespread political support and frequent parliamentary interventions (including PQs and Urgent Questions) on Covid-issues affecting universities
- Progressed work to support Year 13 students transitioning into higher education in autumn 2021 including promoting available support to school and college leaders, sharing sector practice
- Influenced the regulatory landscape being applied to universities during the pandemic
- Identified and addressed Covid challenges for international students including the organisation of charter flights and responding to concerns around international student hardship



## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE YEAR



### POST-18 REFORMS

Developed a comprehensive political, evidence-gathering and influencing strategy in advance of government consultations on funding. Secured positive commitments on the introduction of a lifelong loan entitlement in the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill.



### ADDRESSING WIDER SOCIETAL ISSUES

Continued our high-profile work to tackle all forms of harassment and hate crime including new recommendations on tackling racial harassment and guidance on tackling antisemitism.



### PLACING UNIVERSITIES AT THE HEART OF RECOVERY, SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE AND OPPORTUNITY

Publication of an ambitious vision for UK higher education which places universities at the heart of efforts to create a more equal, healthier, and sustainable future.



### BREXIT PRIORITIES

Supported universities to plan for various Brexit scenarios including a potential no deal. Secured association to Horizon Europe as part of the EU UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement and additional funding to support this participation.



### ADMISSIONS

Supported universities through a challenging A level results period in summer 2020. Published recommendations from the UUK Fair Admissions Review and responded to the government's consultation on Post-Qualification Admissions.



### VALUE

Publication of a progress review on behalf of the UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment on universities' efforts to protect the value of their qualifications. Formation of a UUK advisory group to develop a charter to demonstrate the sector's commitment to consistency and transparency in processes to tackle low value courses.



### INTERNATIONALISATION POST-BREXIT

Shaped the UK government's revised International Education Strategy. Influenced the details of the newly established Turing Scheme.



### MANAGING THE RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Published new guidance to support universities to better safeguard themselves against security-related risks that can arise from international collaborations.



### RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Secured extensive sector support for the Knowledge Exchange Concordat. Shaped the development of the government's Innovation Strategy and championed the role of universities in driving innovation.



### STRENGTHENED MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

Enhanced our member engagement across a range of channels and activities securing high levels of member satisfaction in the UUK members' survey.



### USS PENSIONS

Continued work on the 2020 valuation including a sector-wide formal consultation for USS Employers.



### GOVERNANCE

New Articles of Associations adopted at UUK AGM giving effect to governance review. Extra Board meetings convened to discuss pandemic and USS. Three new member institutions joined UUK.



### TACKLING THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY

Established a task and finish group to maximise sector action in responding to the climate emergency in advance of COP26.



### POLITICAL INFLUENCE

Expanded our political influence with regular ministerial meetings, record membership of the All-Party Parliamentary University Group, regular parliamentary mentions and a 91% increase in the number of parliamentary questions secured.

## OUR WORK IN NUMBERS

**100%** of respondents in the 2021 members' survey rated UUK positively in terms of value for money

**81** positive public references to UUK's work from parliamentarians and government

**174** oral and written questions in parliament

**498** attendees at four UUK members' meetings

**100%** of new VCs engaged with at least one meeting of the New Vice-Chancellors' Group

**3** virtual delegations with **94** attendees

**764,000** unique visitors to the UUK website

**55** meetings and events with UK government and shadow ministers

**46** events hosted online with **8,870** delegates attending

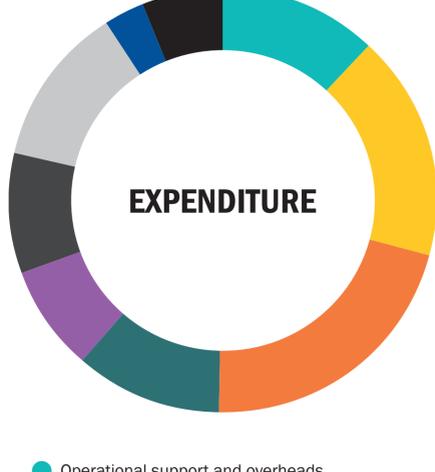
**60** Covid-19 VC group briefings with attendees from **126** UUK member institutions

## FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Despite significantly lower income this year, we are on course to achieve a balanced budget outcome for 2020-21 through tight costs controls and monitoring.



- Membership subscriptions: England and Northern Ireland
- Membership subscriptions: Scotland
- Membership subscriptions: Wales
- USS Pensions reform levy
- Events and conference surplus
- Grant, contract, restricted fund management
- Accounting and investment income
- Covenanted income (WHCC and VCPC)



- Operational support and overheads
- Communications, campaign and political affairs
- Policy, research and analysis
- International engagement and programmes
- CEO office, member services and support
- Pensions reform
- Woburn House rent, rates, building costs
- Staff welfare, recruitment, learning and development
- Rebates: Scotland and Wales