UUK General Election Digest

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27 – 31 May 2024

A weekly digest of general election insight relevant to the higher education sector. This includes policy pledges and general higher education mentions.

Helpful UUK documents:

- Student voter registration toolkit
- General election toolkit
- General election guidance
- Opportunity and growth – UUK manifesto

Helpful websites:

- List of MPs standing down
- List of prospective parliamentary candidates (this will be confirmed after Friday 7 June)
- Politico Poll of Polls

If you have any questions, please contact the Political Affairs team via PoliticalAffairs@universitiesuk.ac.uk
Policy pledges:

Any policy pledges made by political parties that are relevant to the higher education sector will be outlined below.

100,000 new apprenticeships – Conservative Party

On Wednesday 29 May, the Conservative Party pledged to create 100,000 new apprenticeships per year by the end of the next Parliament. This would be funded by removing ‘rip-off degrees.’

As many as one in eight undergraduate degrees could be closed down under the plans, which would introduce new legislation forcing the Office for Students (OfS) to close underperforming courses.

Pressed to name a degree that could be scrapped the Prime Minister told journalists: ‘What we do know is that there are university degrees that are letting young people down.’
Mentions

Any relevant higher education mentions made by politicians on campaign visits or in the media will be listed here. Note, this is not exhaustive.

Q&A during visit to the University of Worcester

On Wednesday 29 May, the Leader of the Opposition, Rt Hon Keir Starmer MP, and the Shadow Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Wes Streeting MP, visited the University of Worcester’s new medical school.

During this visit, they were asked what a Labour government would do to support nursing students through the cost-of-living crisis. The Leader of the Opposition called for greater ‘join-up’ between Universal Credit and other support such as student loans. The Shadow Secretary of State for Health and Social Care said he wanted to do more for nurses, midwives, and allied healthcare professionals.

You can watch the exchange on X.

BBC Question Time

On Thursday 30 May, the Minister of State for School Standards, Rt Hon Damian Hinds MP, and the Shadow Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Wes Streeting MP participated in the BBC Question Time panel.

The Shadow Secretary of State for Health and Social Care described how it was unfair to have a cap on medical student places. This meant highly capable domestic students were ‘turned away’, while talent needed to be recruited from overseas.

The Minister of State for School Standards defended the decision to limit dependents for international students but was generally positive about the contribution of international students. He used the ‘brightest and the best' terminology. The Shadow Secretary of State for Health and Social Care said international students enriched UK campuses as well as subsidising domestic students.

You can catch-up on the episode on BBC iPlayer.