

## Political Affairs Digest

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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:

Tom Lewis | [tom.lewis@universitiesuk.ac.uk](mailto:tom.lewis@universitiesuk.ac.uk) | 0207 419 5424

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# Parliamentary business

## Welsh Affairs Committee – university research funding

On Wednesday 24 May, the Welsh Affairs Committee held an oral evidence session as part of their inquiry into university research funding. The Committee heard from Professor Paul Boyle (Vice-Chancellor at Swansea University and Chair of the Universities UK Research and Innovation Policy Network), Professor Colin Riordan (President and Vice-Chancellor at Cardiff University), Professor Edmund Burke (Vice-Chancellor at Bangor University), and Professor Colin McInnes (Pro Vice-Chancellor of Research, Knowledge Exchange, and Innovation at Aberystwyth University.)

The Chair, Rt Hon Stephen Crabb MP (Conservative) began by asking the panel to outline the loss of EU structural funding and its impact on Welsh universities. Professor Riordan explained that the funding was particularly important for innovation, collaboration with industry, and developing new technologies. He said that the range of projects coming to an end would have a significant impact for the Welsh economy.

Stephen Crabb cited Universities Wales analysis that suggested that up to 1,000 jobs were at risk in Wales, and asked what the immediate ask for government was to address this. Professor Boyle highlighted the immediate ask of bridging funding of around £70 million in Wales and £170 million across the UK to ensure the projects could continue while longer-term alternatives were found. Professor Boyle also criticised the approach taken by the UK Government to replacing funds, highlighting that they had been much more strategic on Horizon alternatives.

Virginia Crosbie MP (Conservative) asked why Welsh universities had historically been so dependent on EU funding. Professor Riordan said this was due to the calculations of how funding was distributed by the EU, and that Wales was given access to these funds due to having some of the highest levels of deprivation in Europe. Funds were also made more accessible by the existence of a Welsh European Funding Office.

Virginia Crosbie asked what more the Welsh government could do to support universities, and to what extent this was an issue relating to the level of fee income. Professor Burke highlighted that research funding was linked to fee income and that this was a UK-wide issue. He noted that inflationary pressures had led to a real-terms fee income reduction and was also why UK universities were so dependent on international student recruitment to cross-subsidise both research and teaching.

On international students more widely, Professor Boyle noted the wider issue of higher education funding and recognised the government had concerns about migration but highlighted that the public did not see students as migrants, and they were not classified as such in many countries. He also noted that it was not just about the income they brought but the cultural richness, benefits for domestic students, and making UK universities truly global institutions. Stephen Crabb agreed that this was a point of strength for UK universities and that we needed to remain attractive to international students.

Asked about the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), Professor Boyle argued that it was not a sufficient replacement for EU funding. He said that the allocation of funds via local authorities had meant that funding was very thinly spread across the UK and that this was not appropriate for the large-scale innovation projects that EU funding had previously supported. Stephen Crabb raised concerns that local authorities did not recognise the role of universities in economic growth. Professor Boyle said that both universities and local authorities were clear about how to improve economic growth but were frustrated by the scale of funding available and that this would prohibit long-term growth projects from being funded.

On longer-term impacts, Professor Boyle said that it would certainly lead to more job losses and the loss of talent and knowledge that had been built over many years, as well as the growth-boosting projects they support. This also comes at a time where there is political agreement that research and innovation drive economic growth. Professor McInnes added that it could affect the attractiveness of Wales as a destination for the best research talent from across the UK and world.

Ben Lake MP (Plaid Cymru) asked whether this could lead to further increasing the concentration of funding and research in the 'golden triangle' of the South East of England. Professor McInnes said that this was almost certainly a risk, given research was such a highly mobile profession. He added that this would also increase economic disparities within Wales.

Asked about the potential to receive more funds from UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), Professor Boyle recognised that UKRI had levelling up ambitions with their distribution of funding, but that this would not be enough to replace EU structural funds. Several panellists noted the role of the Wales Innovation Network in helping attract further funds through partnerships within Wales, but this was hard when also facing such a funding cliff-edge.

On leveraging private investment and working with industry, Professor Boyle highlighted that all universities worked with partners in industry as well as the public and third sectors. He said that this was affected by the industries within the locality of institutions, and that working with smaller businesses was much harder, given their lack of time and money to invest in R&D or innovate. Universities used this funding to work with those smaller businesses on this.

Ruth Jones MP (Labour) asked how crucial Horizon Europe funding was to Welsh institutions. Professor McInnes highlighted that it was not just the money, but also the access it brought to a network of leading scientists across Europe and the world. Professor Boyle said that to compete internationally, it was vital to collaborate with European partners and that Horizon's seven-year funding cycles gave researchers longer-term stability than UK government spending review timeframes.

Asked about online learning, all the witnesses highlighted their institutions were back to face-to-face learning, but that hybrid learning did bring some benefits to learning in certain cases. Professor McInnes spoke about the opportunity it brought for delivering micro-credentials and lifelong learning to people who could not travel to campus, for example.

Stephen Crabb asked whether students would have their exams and assessments marked this year, given ongoing industrial action. Professor Riordan said that if this boycott was maintained by UCU, it could affect assessments, but he was confident that students would graduate through mitigations they were putting in place.

The Chair concluded the session by saying that it was a concern that there had still not been a clear plan for a long-term replacement for EU structural funds, despite it being seven years since the Brexit referendum.

You can [watch the session](#) here.

## **Urgent Question – changes to the student visa route**

On Wednesday 24 May, Carol Monaghan MP (SNP) tabled an Urgent Question asking the Secretary of State for the Home Department to 'make a statement on changes to the student visa route.'

Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP, Minister for Immigration, began by stating that the government had to take account of the changing dynamics of immigration which included potential abuses of the system. He outlined the significant increase in the numbers of dependants brought to the UK by foreign students and how 'systems'

were not designed for large numbers of people to come to the UK in this manner. He outlined how the changes to the visa system announced on Tuesday 23 May would 'protect our public services and housing supply against undue pressure' and deliver on the government's promise to reduce net migration. He recognised that the UK's education institutions were world-renowned and said the government remained committed to the goals of the International Education Strategy (IES).

Carol Monaghan MP noted that international students make an invaluable contribution to the economy, highlighting figures from the UUKi/HEPI report. She asked the Minister to outline how these new measures would impact the university sector and university towns. In his reply, the Minister gave assurances that there would be no unintended consequences of these changes in contrast to those introduced in 2019 which enabled so many dependants to come to the UK. He said it was right that those on longer courses could bring dependants, but it was not right that education could be used as a backdoor for immigration into the UK. He said he did not want to harm the international reputation of UK universities, but attention needed to be paid to pressures on housing supply, public services, and community cohesion.

Stephen Kinnock MP, Shadow Immigration Minister, recognised that international students are valued contributors to the HE sector. He said that Universities UK acknowledged the fact that an increase in dependants had created significant challenges and that enforcement measures were long overdue, which is why Labour were not opposing these new measures. However, he was concerned that the government failed to deliver the detail needed. He asked the Minister if he could set out how many people would be affected by the changes. In his reply, the Minister said the policy would make a tangible difference by reducing the number of dependants coming to the UK, but more interventions may be required.

Rt Hon Greg Clark MP (Conservative), Chair of the Science, Innovation, and Technology Committee, asked whether the government would consider only including students who stay in the UK after they had completed their studies in the net migration figures. The Minister said he did not think it was helpful to change the way net migration figures were reported. He noted that it was too soon to assess the long-term impact of the Graduate route visa. He expected that many more students would choose to stay in the UK on a longer-term basis because of the introduction of the Graduate route.

Alison Thewliss MP (SNP) said that the government's announcement seemed to undermine the #WeareInternational campaign and the UK's place in international higher education. She highlighted the economic contribution of international students in her constituency from the UUKi/HEPI report and asked the Minister if he could present the data which showed that people were abusing the international student visa system. She also asked what equality impact assessments had been

carried out, given Universities UK International (UUKi) had said the policy could have a disproportionate impact on women from particular regions, such as Nigeria and India. The Minister said university leaders understand the issues posed by significant increases in the numbers of dependants coming to the UK and these new measures will allow dependants of PGR students to come to the UK but not for those on short courses.

Cat Smith MP (Labour) asked what conversations the Minister had had with universities, including Lancaster University, about the implications of this policy on league table rankings. The Minister stressed the IES target had been met 10 years early and would be exceeded this year. He said the government was tackling an unintended consequence of liberalisation of the visa system and said that UK universities should not be overly reliant on income from international students.

Rt Hon Sir Desmond Swayne MP (Conservative) suggested that after the new measures had taken effect, the UK could treat foreign students as a 'booming export' rather than as immigration. The Minister celebrated the important export industry and reiterated that the policy would ensure there were no unintended consequences or pressure on public services as a result.

Rt Hon Sir John Hayes (Conservative) asked why research students were able to bring dependants, but other students could not. The Minister said the government would launch a consultation with the sector to determine a longer-term approach to student visas. The rationale behind the new policy ensured that students studying high value, longer term research-based courses would be allowed to bring dependants.

Aaron Bell MP (Conservative) recognised the huge role of his local university, Keele University, but said it was vital to 'get on top' of some universities 'selling immigration rather than education.' The Minister reiterated previous remarks on the importance of universities to focus primarily on education.

Rt Hon Ben Bradshaw MP (Labour) asked how the Minister intended to avoid discriminating against students from Nigeria and India, who were more likely to bring dependants. The Minister said the new measures would tackle the unintended consequence of significant increases in dependants coming to the UK and would not harm students from particular nationalities.

Joanna Cherry KC MP (SNP) highlighted the economic contribution of students to her constituency from UUKi/Hepi's report and asked why the Minister would not consider devolving immigration policy to the Scottish Government. The Minister said the UK government had no intention of devolving immigration policy.

Layla Moran MP (Liberal Democrat) noted the economic contribution of her local universities (University of Oxford and Oxford Brookes) to the local economy and asked why the government and Labour party were intent on stifling universities and the economy.

Tom Hunt MP (Conservative) expressed concerns that some universities might try to redesign some one-year taught master courses as research courses to bypass the new measures. The Minister said the government would monitor the new changes closely to avoid any unintended consequences and the consultation would help to refine the policy.

Steve McCabe MP (Labour) noted the high compliance rates for student visas and suggested there might be 'better targets' for the government. The Minister noted the high levels of compliance but that the Graduate route could result in more students staying on in the UK after they complete their studies.

Paul Blomfield MP (Labour) welcomed the diversification of students and noted that it was predictable that those students coming from different markets would bring dependants with them. He asked if the Minister would delay introducing a blanket ban on dependants of PGT students until the consultation with the sector had concluded. The Minister said he remained committed to launching the policy as stated but that the consultation would help refine the policy. He said he did not recognise the reasons why a Chinese student would be less likely to bring a dependant than a Nigerian or Indian student.

You can [read a transcript](#) and [watch the session](#) here.

## **Urgent Question - net migration figures**

On Thursday 25 May, Rt Hon Yvette Cooper, Shadow Home Secretary tabled an Urgent Question asking the Secretary of State for the Home Department to 'make a statement on net migration figures.'

Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP, Minister for Immigration, said they had taken steps to tackle the substantial rise in the number of student dependants. The package of measures intended to reduce migration while continuing to benefit from the skills and resources that the economy needed. He clarified that universities should be in the 'education business' and not the 'immigration business'.

Yvette Cooper MP said Labour welcomed international students who bring substantial benefits and described changes to dependants as 'sensible'.



Rt Hon Sir Desmond Swayne MP (Conservative) asked for an estimate of the impact of measures introduced on restricting dependants. The Minister said it would have a ‘tangible effect’ on dependant numbers, which were ‘considerable’. He reiterated that it was not right that universities in some cases were in the ‘immigration business’ rather than ‘education business’. This clamp-down would help reduce net migration in the medium term.

Deidre Brock MP (SNP) raised recent investment for international students in Australia. Given the global market, she asked why the government was cracking down on dependants and reducing the incentive to study in the UK. In his reply, the Minister noted the targets of the International Education Strategy and said the government were not creating a hostile environment for international students.

You can [read a transcript](#) and [watch the session](#) here.

# Forthcoming business

## **Recess**

On Thursday 25 May, the House of Commons and House of Lords rose for Whitsun Recess. Both Houses will return on Monday 5 June.

# Written Questions

## Space: Education

Damien Moore: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department is taking steps to encourage students in (a) schools and (b) universities to study subjects that could lead to careers in the commercial space sector. [UIN 185310]

Robert Halfon: Science, technology, engineering, and maths (STEM) skills are in demand by employers across the country, and demand is growing. The department is investing in STEM education at all levels to ensure people have access to high-quality STEM teaching and can access STEM career opportunities within sectors such as the space sector.

The department is investing to recruit and retain high-quality teachers of STEM related subjects in schools and further education. Since autumn 2022, early career teachers of mathematics, physics, chemistry, or computing, who work in disadvantaged, state-funded secondary schools have been able to claim a Levelling Up Premium of up to £3,000 tax free per year, for up to three years. We also fund a suite of training and professional development offers to support high-quality STEM teaching.

The department is boosting the take-up of STEM subjects by delivering my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister's ambition of ensuring all students in England study maths to 18. We are also funding tailored maths support for students and teachers through the Advanced Mathematics Support Programme, investing £84 million into the National Centre for Computing Education to drive increased participation in computer science, and funding research programmes on how to tackle gender balance in STEM subjects.

The government also supports programmes such as STEM Ambassadors, which inspires young people from under-served backgrounds to engage with STEM subjects.

The department is investing an additional £750 million over the three-year period from 2022/23 to 2024/25 to support high-quality teaching and facilities in higher education, including in science and engineering, subjects that support the NHS, and degree apprenticeships. Degree apprenticeships offer people of all backgrounds a unique opportunity to combine degree-level study with being in a job and earning from day one.

## Overseas Students: Visas

Stephen Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department has made an assessment of the adequacy of the support available to families moving to the UK on a student visa. [UIN 185082]

Robert Halfon: As set out in the government's International Education Strategy and subsequent updates, the department is committed to working with the higher education sector to enhance the international student experience, and to ensure they have an enjoyable and valuable experience whilst in the UK. Details of the strategy are available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/international-education-strategy-global-potential-global-growth/international-education-strategy-global-potential-global-growth>.

This includes working closely with organisations such as the UK Council for International Student Affairs, who offer a range of information and guidance for those travelling on a student visa. This information is available at: <https://www.ukcisa.org.uk/>(opens in a new tab).

In addition, universities provide a range of dedicated support to their international students at pre-arrival, on-arrival and during their studies. This includes welcoming services, transitional support and visa advice.

As set out in Home Office guidance, international students and their families who come to the UK on a student visa are required to have money to support themselves for the duration of their studies. The guidance is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/student-visa>(opens in a new tab). Generally, to qualify for student support from Student Finance England, a person resident in England must have settled status or a recognised connection to the UK. This 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.

## Visas: Families

Stephen Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment her Department has made of the adequacy of the support available to families moving to the UK on a student visa. [UIN 185087]

Robert Jenrick: Providing support to families moving to the UK on a student visa is not within the remit of the Home Office. It is a requirement of the Student route that applicants demonstrate their ability to support themselves and their dependants financially during their stay in the UK as set out in the Immigration Rules: Appendix Student.

## **Research: India**

Chi Onwurah: To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, with reference to her Department's press release UK and India sign landmark research agreement, published on 26 April 2023: whether the £8.3 million of funding announced will be counted towards the (a) international or (b) domestic government science spend. [UIN 184970]

George Freeman: The Office for National Statistics aims to count research performed in the United Kingdom as part of UK domestic gross expenditure on R&D, but not research performed overseas.

The £8.3 million of funding announced in the press notice published on 26 April forms part of the Government's funding commitment to R&I and will be counted as part of this commitment.

The memorandum of understanding and the funding announced in the press notice will support researchers in UK universities to develop collaborative research projects with leading researchers in India.

## **Post-18 Education and Funding Review**

Alex Sobel: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when her Department plans to publish the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding. [UIN 184841]

Robert Halfon: The Review of Post-18 Education and Funding was published in May 2019.

On 24 February 2022, the department published the Higher Education (HE) Reform Consultation, setting out reforms to the student loan system to put it on a fair and sustainable footing and a package of investment into the HE sector. The department also proposed a range of reforms to improve outcomes for students as a result of their courses and help them move into high-value employment.

The HE Reform Consultation closed on 6 May 2022. The department is now considering the views received and plans to publish a response to the consultation in due course.

## **Students: Mental Health**

Alberto Costa: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans his Department has to provide funding for improving the mental health of 18-25 year olds in further or higher education; and whether it is his policy to support the introduction of legislation to make it compulsory for universities and colleges to (a) record suicides and (b) facilitate joined up monitoring of mental health of young people in further and higher education. [UIN 185818]

Robert Halfon: Every student death is a tragedy. The government is committed to doing all we can to prevent these devastating events, which we know have a profound and lasting impact on family and friends.

Whilst we do not plan to legislate higher education (HE) and further education (FE) providers to publicly record suicide numbers, this department does believe it is important to understand the overall trends in HE suicides and share best practice when tragedy does occur. This is why we asked the Office of National Statistics (ONS) to publish an updated linked data analysis on HE suicides. The ONS published the refreshed dataset and analysis on 31 May 2022, which included HE student deaths by suicide from the 2016/17 to 2019/20 academic years, and this can be found here: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/articles/estimating-suicide-among-higher-education-students-england-and-wales-experimental-statistics/2017-to-2020>(opens in a new tab).

In order to better support student mental health, especially with regards to the transition between school or college into HE, the department has asked the Office for Students to distribute £15 million of funding to HE providers in 2023/24 to support student mental health, including providing additional support for transitions from school or college to university, with a particular focus on providing counselling services for students. Funding has already supported 32 providers to actively participate in groups in the seven NHS regions to explore more formal partnership working, with the ultimate aim of closing any gaps in mental health provision for students.

To support the development and implementation of a whole college approach to mental health and wellbeing, the department is giving all colleges in England access

to senior mental health leads training by 2025. We are also providing record funding for children and young people's mental health support in the NHS long term plan, through which we are investing at least an additional £2.3 billion a year above 2018/19 levels into mental health services in England by March 2024. This funding will enable an additional 345,000 people under the age of 25 to get the mental health support they need.

The department also recognises that early intervention is critical to prevent the progression and escalation of mental health issues. For this reason, we are introducing Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs) in schools and colleges. These teams offer support to young people experiencing common mental health issues and facilitate smoother access to external specialist support.

An important step towards HE providers delivering mental health support is student disclosure of mental health conditions. It is vital that students disclose their mental health conditions to their HE provider, so that they can be supported, rather than suffering in silence.

Students are actively encouraged to declare a mental health condition when they apply for university via UCAS. Prospective students can enter any needs related to their mental health difficulty, which is then passed on to the course providers so they can consider additional support, including support prior to commencing the course.

The department supports the Suicide Safer Universities framework, led by Universities UK and Papyrus, which can be found at:

<https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/what-we-do/policy-and-research/publications/suicide-safer-universities>.

As well as supporting universities to prevent student suicides and support students and families after the death of a student, this framework includes additional guidance on information sharing and postvention guidance (actions after a death by suspected suicide), which can be found here: <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/what-we-do/policy-and-research/publications/features/suicide-safer-universities/sharing-information>





# Sector News

## **Parliamentary Taskforce on Antisemitism in Higher Education – report and good practice guide**

On Tuesday 23 May, the Parliamentary Taskforce on Antisemitism in Higher Education published a report titled ‘Understanding Jewish experience in Higher Education.’ The report was accompanied by a good practice guide for universities which features eight steps for institutions to follow to help improve campus relations and activity.

The Taskforce on Antisemitism in Higher Education was established by the government’s Independent Adviser on Antisemitism, Lord Mann, with support from members of the All-Party Parliamentary Group Against Antisemitism in 2022.

The inquiry aimed to gain a better understanding of the experience of Jewish students and staff within Higher Education (HE) and to examine the trends and issues that are impacting their experience, both positively and negatively. The Taskforce held hearings at university campuses across the UK and with students’ unions and sectoral bodies, to discuss the work they are doing to combat antisemitism, support their Jewish members and create an inclusive environment. The Taskforce also held focus groups with Jewish students and staff to hear their perspectives and better understand the measures institutions can take to support them.

You can [read the report and good practice guide](#) here.

## **#WeAreInternational campaign**

On Tuesday 23 May, Universities UK International (UUKi), the UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA), the British Universities International Liaison Association (BUILA), London Higher, and the Study UK campaign at the British Council jointly relaunched the #WeAreInternational campaign.

The campaign aims to celebrate and communicate the economic, cultural, social, and civic contribution international students make to the UK through highlighting the stories which show how welcoming the UK is to prospective and current international students.

You can follow the campaign on social media through [#WeAreInternational](#).

## **International student dependants announcement**

On Tuesday 23 May, the Home Secretary, Rt Hon Suella Braverman MP, published a written ministerial statement announcing a new package of measures impacting international students. These include:

1. Removing the right for international students to bring dependants unless they are on postgraduate courses currently designated as research programmes.
2. Removing the ability for international students to switch out of the student route into work routes before their studies have been completed.
3. Reviewing the maintenance requirements for students and dependants.
4. Steps to clamp down on unscrupulous education agents who may be supporting inappropriate applications to sell immigration not education.
5. Better communicating immigration rules to the higher education sector and to international students.
6. Improved and more targeted enforcement activity.

The statement acknowledges the close working of the Department of Education, HM Treasury, and Home Office and aims to ‘strike the right balance between acting decisively on tackling net migration and protecting the economic benefits that students can bring to the UK.’

In response to the written ministerial statement, Jamie Arrowsmith, Director of Universities UK International, said: ‘Ultimately, our collective aim must be to ensure that international students who choose the UK can be confident that they are welcome here, that their contribution is valued, and that the terms on which they have made decisions remain stable. Anything that threatens to affect the UK’s global success as a top destination for international talent needs to be considered very carefully.’

You can read the [full written ministerial statement](#) and UUKi’s [response](#) here.

## **OfS registration fees announcement**

On Tuesday 23 May, a statutory instrument, titled the Higher Education (Registration Fees) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2023 confirmed the new registration fees

for the Office for Students (OfS). The new annual fees, based on the number of full-time equivalent students, range from £14,220 to £214,485.

Rt Hon Robert Halfon MP, Minister for Skills, Apprenticeships, and Higher Education also wrote to the Lords Industry and Regulators Committee outlining the decision. In the letter he explained the increased operating costs for the OfS including the implementation of the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act and the designated quality body (DQB) functions.

You can read the [full statutory instrument](#) here and [the letter](#) here.

## **International Higher Education Strategy 2.0**

On Tuesday 23 May, the International Higher Education Commission released a report titled 'International Higher Education Strategy 2.0: Targeted Growth for Resilience'.

The report concludes that the International Education Strategy 2.0 must focus on strategic action that targets growth for resilience. Market diversification and maintaining the UK's competitiveness were identified as particularly important.

It calls for a clear understanding of the challenges and an evidence base that enables informed decisions between options to be made.

In the foreword, Rt Hon Chris Skidmore MP, Chair of the International Higher Education Commission, wrote: 'It is time to revisit the strategic framework for UK HE and to establish a clear narrative around the significant social, cultural, and economic benefits that international students bring to the UK; how international students influence the learning and other experiences of domestic students; and the wider links of global activities to the international research, reach out and knowledge transfer roles that universities perform.'

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

## **ONS migration figures**

On Thursday 25 May, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) published long-term international migration figures.

Key findings include:

- UK net migration reached 606,000 in 2022.
- In 2022, 361,000 people arrived on study-related visas, an increase from 301,000 in 2021. This increase is mainly attributed to dependants (from 41,000 in 2021 to 85,000 in 2022).

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

## **Higher Education working conditions – HEPI report**

On Thursday 25 May, the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) published a new report, Comparative Study of Higher Education Academic Staff Terms and Conditions, which was commissioned from SUMS Consulting.

The paper benchmarks the pay and benefits of academics based on the various drivers of ‘Good Work’ defined by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD).

It finds:

- Many working conditions in higher education are relatively generous, and sometimes much more so, than in other sectors – for example, in areas like pensions, leave, sick pay, parental leave and access to sabbaticals.
- In some other areas, academics face conditions that are less good than those in other professions, most notably in regard to the proportion of staff on temporary contracts.

Nick Hillman, Director of HEPI, said: ‘Those on both sides of the recent industrial disputes in higher education would do well to reflect on what more can now be done to tackle precarity in higher education. On the basis of this research, that looks like it may well be a more urgent priority than forever protecting gold-plated pensions against all change.’

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

## **Data on rejected speakers at English universities – OfS**

On Thursday 25 May, the Office for Students (OfS) published new data on speakers and events at English universities, alongside information from the data universities and colleges return to the OfS as part of their compliance with the Prevent duty.

Key findings include:

- During 2021/22, 31,545 speakers or events were approved to be held in English universities and colleges – an increase from 19,405 events during 2020/21 (however a number of restrictions were in place during this time).
- During 2021/22, 260 planned events did not go ahead – this is an increase from 195 the previous period.
- 55 cases were subject to formal referral to external Prevent agencies.

Commenting on the data, David Smy, Director of monitoring and intervention at the OfS, said: ‘While this data suggests that the overwhelming majority of events with external speakers went ahead as planned – which is welcome – the data may not provide the full picture. The data does not capture decisions not to invite speakers in the first place or voluntary withdrawal of requests for approval. We recognise that this could be masking cases where event organisers or speakers feel unable to proceed with the event they had planned.’

You can [read more](#) here.