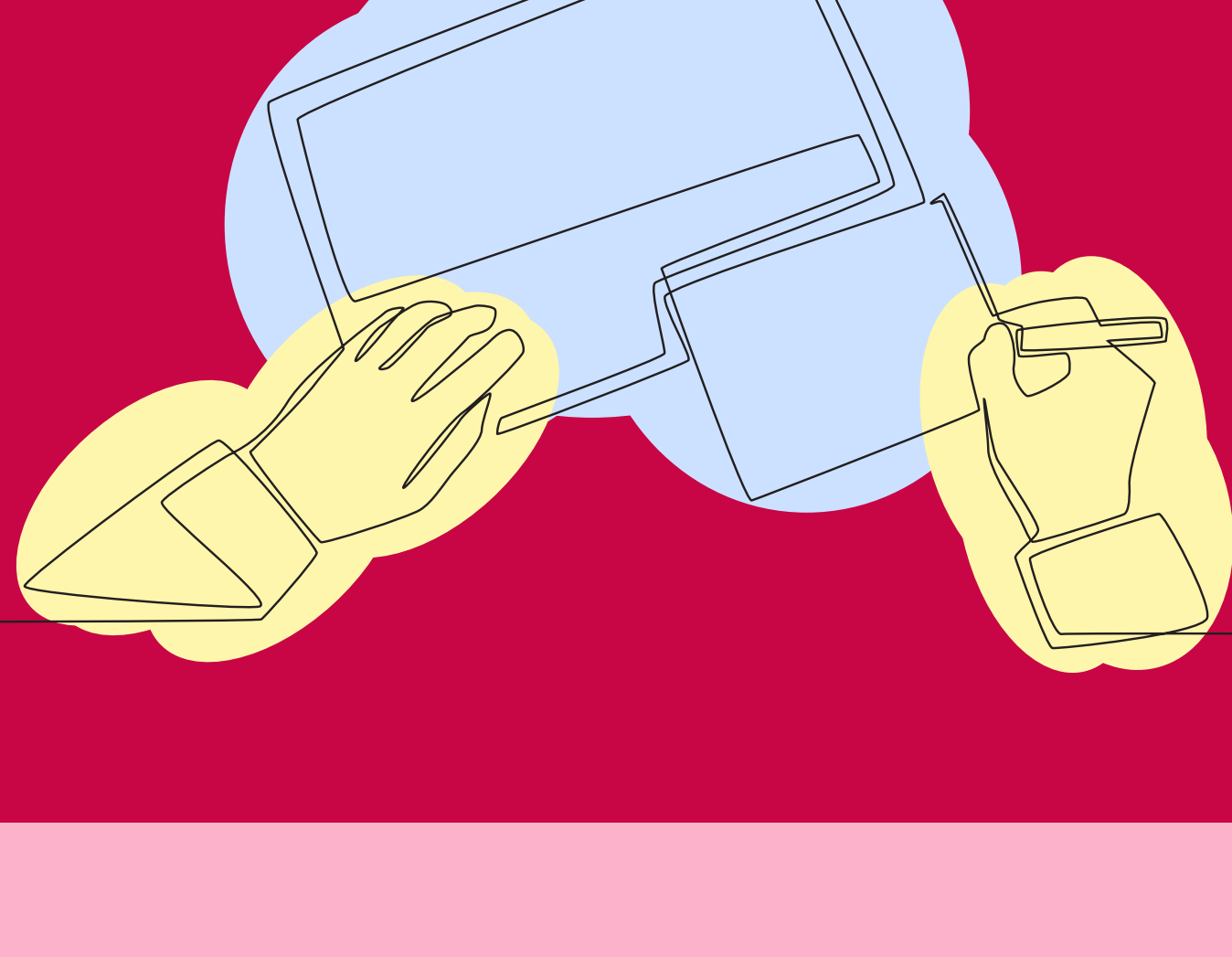


Our work

2022-23



- Our work
- Introduction from the CEO
- Highlights from the year
- UK-Ukraine Twinning Initiative
- Financial review
- Our services to members

Introduction from the Chief Executive

Since taking up the role of CEO last September, I have increasingly felt that it is both a privilege and a great responsibility to lead this organisation. Our university system is a national treasure, but it faces some considerable challenges. In this overview of our work, you will see how Universities UK has worked to support our member institutions through our policy and advocacy work, and our ability to convene universities to address common problems. You will also see how we have begun to focus our work behind a small number of long-term goals, reflecting the many discussions that we have had with those who lead our universities, as well as the much wider group of people who care about their future success.

The strategy we will publish this Autumn is the product of many of these conversations and will set out how Universities UK will work to create the conditions our universities need to thrive. Our clear priority is the long-term financial sustainability of higher education and research across all four nations of the UK. Work towards this goal will be underpinned by a sustained effort to improve understanding and appreciation of our universities

and their contribution to society. But these are not ends in themselves. Universities serve society in many ways, and through our ability to convene university leaders and influence policy, we will make a stronger contribution to national growth, individual opportunity and the search for solutions, innovations and discoveries.

This overview of our work sets out how we have started to shape that work in the last year. To give some examples, we have convened a national conversation on the future funding of teaching and research, while building the evidence base which will illustrate the need for action. We have started to reinvigorate our approach to communications. We have shaped policy on international student visas, seeing off proposed restrictions to the Graduate Route. We have pushed forward proposals for the improvement of regulation in England, building the case for change and securing modest but meaningful progress. We have influenced key pieces of legislation such as the Freedom of Speech Bill, to reduce the potential adverse consequences. Our work to represent USS employers has seen us pick a careful path towards the

current valuation, working towards securing agreement with the unions on a route map to longer term stability in the scheme. And at the political level, we have built upon our reputation as a constructive partner of Government while simultaneously broadening and deepening our political relationships with the Labour front bench.

None of this would be possible without the active engagement of our member institutions. I want to thank you for your support, advice and contributions to our policy development and communications efforts. Universities UK is far more than the teams in London, Edinburgh and Cardiff – it is all of us working together.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our outgoing President, Professor Sir Steve West for his service over the last two years. His calm and thoughtful leadership has been hugely appreciated, as is his particular contribution to the field of mental health. His recent Knighthood was well deserved. I look forward to working with Professor Dame Sally Mapstone who takes up the Presidency from 1 August 2023.

Vivienne Stern MBE
Chief Executive



Highlights from the year

Securing a sustainable future for our universities

Launch of the national conversation on the future of university funding

Working with governments, political parties, consumer groups, employers, staff, students and the wider public the conversation is aiming to identify possible long-term approaches to the funding that universities receive for their teaching and research.

Lifelong learning

UUK continues to be closely involved in the policy development of the Lifelong Loan Entitlement in England representing the interests of our members. The consultation response saw the government commit to the removal of all remaining ELQ restrictions, and to introduce maintenance support for in-person modular study.

Research and Innovation

Commissioned a review of concordats and agreements and led the development of the Research Culture and Practice Forum [June 2023]. Published Higher Education Research and Innovation in Facts and Figures and webpage on the contributions of university research and innovation.

Established a new Pro Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation Network to help develop UUK positions on R&I policy.

Engaged in reviews and strategies on the RD&I organisational landscape, bureaucracy and people and culture.

Security

Published case studies and streamlined resources on how universities are managing risk in internationalisation.

Facilitated peer learning at domestic and international level on security-related issues.

Engaged extensively with government departments and arms length bodies to support engagement with the sector and associated guidance.

Growth

Published the report 'Our universities: generating growth and opportunity' which explores ways in which universities can contribute to economic growth. The report highlights the success of UEZ projects in Nottingham, Liverpool, Hertfordshire, Bradford and Bristol. It demonstrates how well-placed and crucial universities are to supporting economic growth which is a priority for the UK government.

Engaged closely with the Labour party to influence developing thinking on Innovation policy, including submission to their review of startups, and hosting a roundtable with the Shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury.

Raised awareness of the risks to University research and innovation projects currently supported by European structural funds, resulting in recognition of the issue by the Secretary of States for DSIT and DLUHC.

High-quality education and good regulation

Regulation

Influenced the OIS to take a refined, and less bureaucratic, approach to Access and Participation Plans which should reduce burden for many member institutions.

Submitted written and gave oral evidence to the House of Lords Inquiry and Regulators Committee Inquiry into the Office for Students, setting out a constructive case for reform.

OIS has already since committed to including regulatory burden in all future consultations, revised its approach to provider engagement, and established a task and finish group on retention of assessment.

Hosted a Good Regulation Symposium, bringing together HE and non-HE regulators, sector leaders, students, and academic experts to explore the performance of the OIS to date and where we can learn from other sectors establishing UUK as a leading voice in these discussions.

Free Speech and Academic Freedom

Worked with MPs and Lords to influence the contents and implementation of the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act, including reforms which ensure the Act remains as a legal backstop – only available to individuals after they have exhausted other routes and complaints schemes, rather than a first port of call.

Admissions

UCAS data showed conditional unconditional offers have almost completely disappeared, driven largely by our sector-led code of practice and avoiding regulatory action.

Quality

We have worked with the QAA and GuildHE to publish principles around external examining, completing the activity commitments of the UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment's (UKSQSA) statement of intent on grade inflation, and took on the secretariat function of the UKSCQA.

We have worked across the sector to demonstrate the sector's continued efforts and leadership in addressing the risks associated with grade inflation winning the confidence of students, employers and Government. 118 institutions published degree outcomes statements last year and across the sector there was a 4-point reduction in 'upper degrees' following pandemic-related increases.

We submitted responses to OIS consultations on condition B3, the Teaching Excellence Framework, and the metrics and measures used in the assessment of quality, to shape regulatory approaches in England and, through doing so, secured a revised timeline for the TEF amongst other changes.

Supporting Student Success

Tackling harassment

Universities UK produced a Practice Note to help universities respond to reported spiking incidents. The Note outlines principles and considerations for universities, along with 'immediate actions' checklist to respond to an incident. We also published practical guidance on Tackling staff-student sexual misconduct.

In April, we responded to OIS' consultation on a new approach to regulating harassment and sexual misconduct, stating that we did not see this as a suitable area for OIS regulation.

Student mental health

In partnership with PAPYRUS Prevention of Young Suicide published recommendations calling on universities to be more proactive in preventing student suicides, in particular how and when universities should involve families, carers and trusted others when there are serious concerns about the safety or mental health of a student.

Universities UK published a checklist for universities to help them support students in the transition to, during, and upon returning from a placement.

Cost of living

Universities UK presented data and information on the impact of the cost of living crisis for the student population and welcomed the government's decision to increase hardship funding for the higher education sector to shore up the support provided by member institutions to their students.

International students

Universities UK has responded robustly throughout the year to the speculation that the UK government may look to cut international student numbers, or remove the Graduate route visa. We have:

- Maintained cross-party support for both the International Education Strategy and Graduate route.
- Worked with Public First to show the public are not in favour of cutting the number of international students.
- Secured concessions which allow postgraduate research students to still bring dependants.
- Published guidance to support the sector to diversify their international recruitment while maintain high levels of compliance with the immigration rules.

Benefits of international education

UUK International, with partners HEPI, Kaplan International Pathways, and London Economics, published a report exploring the impact of international students to the UK economy. The costs and benefits of international higher education students to the UK report is a follow up to a similar report published in 2021.

#WeAreInternational

Relaunch of the #WeAreInternational campaign, with universities across the UK celebrating the social, cultural and civic contributions international students make, telling their individual stories raising awareness of these individual stories and to further enhance the positive understanding of and sentiment towards international students in the eyes of public, political and media opinion. Over 70 universities joined in the campaign on the relaunch day, reaching over 7 million people.

UK-Ukraine Twinning Initiative

Following the invasion of Ukraine, the UK higher education sector stepped up to support their counterparts in Ukraine. The most significant development of this has been the UK-Ukraine University Twinning Initiative. Developed in partnership between Universities UK International (UUKI) and Cormack Consultancy Group (CCG), this initiative enables UK universities to support their Ukraine counterparts both through short-term aid and longer-term strategic activity, through institution-to-institution collaboration. This work has been funded by the FCDO and UKRI/Research England.

President Zelenskyy's office have welcomed the scheme, and support for the initiative has been swift and positive, with almost 100 partnerships formalised between Ukrainian universities and universities in the UK in the past year. A key part of the purpose of UK universities is to transform lives and change the world for the better. The UK-Ukraine university twinning initiative is an incredibly impactful example of universities truly living this purpose.

In September 2022, Universities UK International launched a campaign called, #TwinForHope. This was aimed at raising the profile of the twinning initiative and driving up the number of twinning partnerships. You can view a short feature film created for this campaign, with voices from both sides of twinning partnerships, at www.universityuk.ac.uk/twinforhope

- Twinning projects include:
- the University of Glasgow fully fund 100 students from the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy to study with them, empowering those students to continue their education;
 - the University of Liverpool provide an extensive database of online learning materials through a purpose-built platform for over 100 academics at their twin, Surny State University, so they can continue to teach.
 - the University of Sheffield, twinned with Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute (KPI), who highlighted the practical assistance they provided, including rebuilding air raid shelters.
 - the University of the West of Scotland, who sent students from the Ukrainian State University of Railway Transport power banks and lamps.
 - Swansea University, who have brought Ukrainian students over from their twin, Petro Mohyla Black Sea National University (PMBNSU), for study visits.

“More than 2,000 education institutions have been damaged and more than 280 destroyed. We're grateful for the brilliant [twinning] initiative and for UK universities who offered a helping hand to Ukrainians through this difficult time.”

Serhiy Shkarlet,
Ukraine's Minister of Education and Science

I've a feeling that our people have started to breathe again. They're getting hope. It's because of your university [University of York] via the twinning scheme [that they start to smile again].

Professor Tetyana Kaganovska,
President, Karazin Kharkiv National University

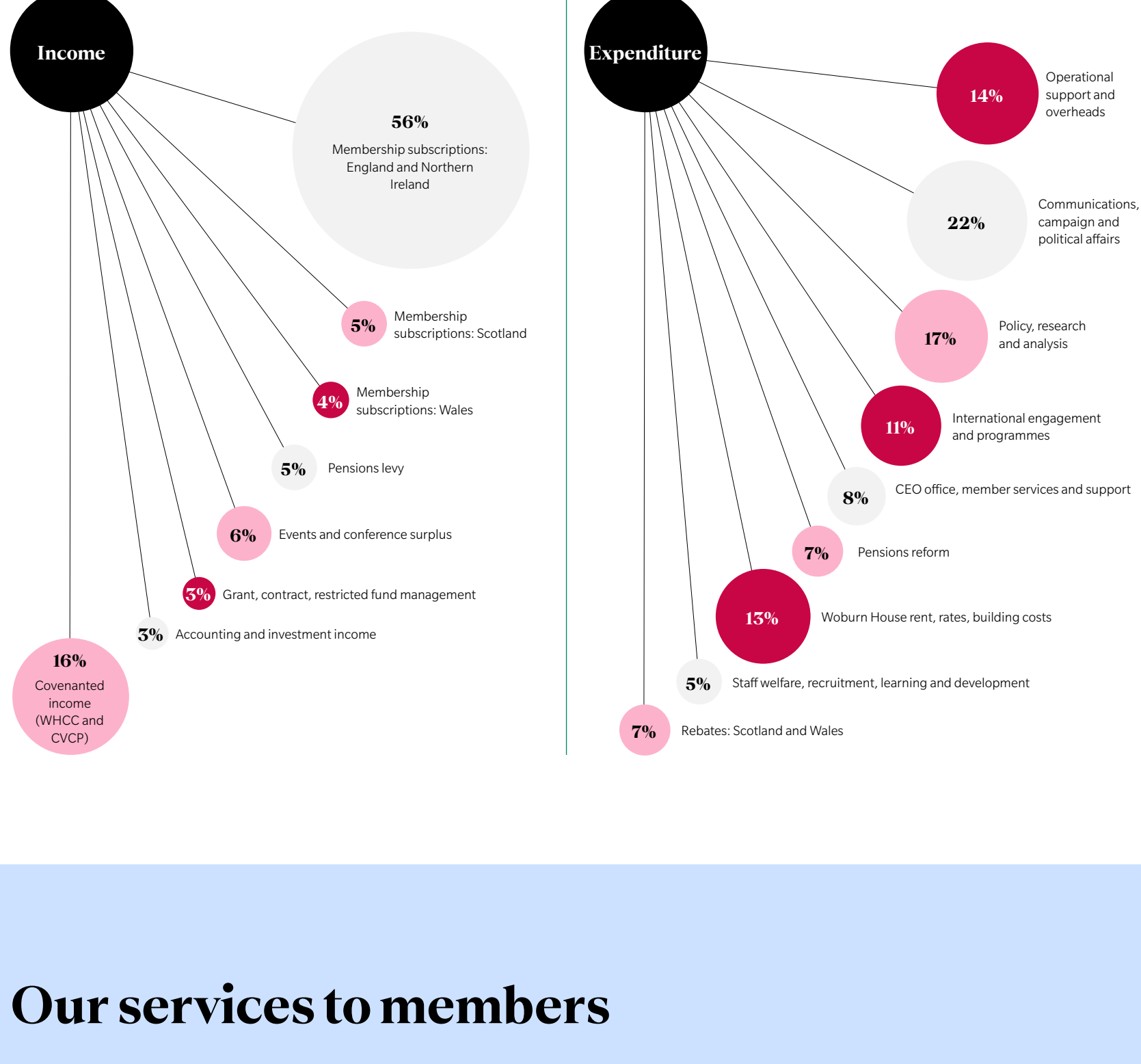
I'm delighted that through the twinning programme, Ukrainian universities are able to collaborate with UK universities to develop strong partnerships that will benefit both nations, while addressing global research and innovation challenges.

George Freeman, UK Science Minister



- Our work
- Introduction from the CEO
- Highlights from the year
- UK-Ukraine Twinning Initiative
- Financial review
- Our services to members

Financial review



- Our work
- Introduction from the CEO
- Highlights from the year
- UK-Ukraine Twinning Initiative
- Financial review
- Our services to members

Our services to members

Political activity

Our Political Affairs team secured:

26 meetings with UK government and shadow ministers

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

34 oral and written questions in parliament

Member communications

40 monthly CEO/VC calls

61 email briefings including CEO news

2022 member survey

97% of members felt UUK provides value for money

80% of members feel engaged or very engaged with UUK's work

Member networking opportunities

We ran our new Vice-Chancellor and Mid-term Vice-Chancellor programmes in the year

Continued to match mentors and mentees on request

Ran 4 member meetings, including the September annual conference.

Comms Hub

Our new comms hub was launched which will be a resource for comms and political affairs messaging and sharing case studies of work across the sector.

USS Pensions

Continued work as the employer representative body for USS, which involves work on the 2023 valuation, and includes sector-wide engagement and support for USS Employers.

- Our work
- Introduction from the CEO
- Highlights from the year
- UK-Ukraine Twinning Initiative
- Financial review
- Our services to members