UUK General Election Digest

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3 – 7 June 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.

Cut net migration – Labour party

On Saturday 1 June, Keir Starmer pledged to cut net migration figures in an interview with the Sun. The proposal involves linking skills with immigration: training British workers in construction, IT, social care, health and engineering to reduce these sectors’ reliance on overseas workers. To do this, Labour will bring together the Migration Advisory Committee, the Industrial Strategy Council and Skills England.

You can read the Sun interview.

Growth and Skills levy – Labour party

On Saturday 1 June, Labour recommitted to broadening the Apprenticeships Levy into a Growth and Skills levy which would allow firms to use up to 50% of their levy contributions to fund training through routes other than apprenticeships.

Announcing the recommitment to the policy, Shadow Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson said, “Labour will put businesses in the driving seat of creating the opportunities people need to get on in work”.

You can read the IFS’ analysis of the proposal.

New annual cap on visas – Conservative party

On Monday 3 June, the Conservative party pledged to introduce a cap on worker and family visas to reduce net migration. An annual limit on net migration would be proposed by the Migration Advisory Committee and voted on by MPs to continuously bring net migration figures down.

Please note this policy announcement does not apply to student visas.

You can read more about the proposal.
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.

Visit to Keele University

On Tuesday 4 June, Shadow Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, Peter Kyle, visited Keele University.

During the visit, Kyle said the “war against universities will stop if there’s a Labour government”.

Reflecting on his own experience of higher education, he told journalists:

The University of Sussex was the first institution that saw something in me that I never knew that I had and it wheedled it out of me and gave it focus and helped me explore it

So the idea that we have a Government that’s trying to retract the access to higher education and everything it gives as one pathway through a life of education and exploring your potential cuts very deep for me.

You can read an article about the visit.

ITV Leaders Debate

On Tuesday 4 June, Rishi Sunak and Keir Starmer took part in a head-to-head debate on ITV.

In response to a young person in the audience asking when will younger generations be prioritised, Starmer said:

What I think is really important is that you have the further education choices that you need, whether that be university or technical skills. I think either are perfectly equivalent, they’re really important. My dad was a toolmaker, so he went down the skills route, I was the first in my family to go to university.

You can catch up on the debate on ITV X.