Political Affairs Digest

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:

Issy Cooke
issy.cooke@universitiesuk.ac.uk
0207 419 5434

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Parliamentary Business

Westminster Hall debate on tuition fee levels

On Monday 25 October, Tom Hunt MP led a Westminster Hall debate on reducing university student tuition fees from £9250 to £3000. The petition calls on the government to consider holding debates in Parliament between MPs and university students to raise/discuss issues that affect them.

Education Committee member Tom Hunt MP (Con), who led the debate noted that 75% of students do not pay back the amount borrowed and the interest. He expressed concern that the level of fees could be putting off young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, drawing attention to the Education Committee’s report on ‘white working-class kids’. However, he also had concerns that decreasing fees to £3000 would be a taxpayer subsidy for university education. He then went on to focus on the need to invest in alternatives to university, particularly apprenticeships and skills.

He noted that the repayment threshold was set at £28,000 but said that could still be “difficult for people trying to get by” and that the loan was taken into account by mortgage providers. He concluded by saying he did believe it is in the taxpayers best interest to support the petition.

Members raised questions and gave comments on an alternative finance system for Muslim students, graduate employment, the financial challenges students have faced during the pandemic and the German higher education system.

Universities Minister Michelle Donelan did not answer the questions raised in the debate, responding that the government’s Augar response would be announced shortly and there would be opportunities to question her and the Secretary of State then.

You can read a transcript of the debate here.

Skills and Post-16 Education Bill – Third Reading

On Monday 25 October, members of the Lords debated the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill in the Third Reading.

Lord Blunkett (Lab), former education secretary, asked the Minister to provide further detail of funding for skills that had been briefed to the media ahead of the Budget. Lord Blunkett reiterated his concerns about the speed at which BTEC national diplomas were being defunded, particularly under the assumption that students who were most likely to take these qualifications would have the most to gain from the switch to T Levels. He cautioned that many recently upgraded BTECs were "just what employers need for the future" and T levels were yet to be fully tested.

Lord Storey, Lib Dem Lords education spokesperson, said two things mattered at the end of the day: "One is that the funding is there; the other is that we need to see a cultural change in how society views further and vocational education because if that does not happen, then all our hard work will be for nothing."

Lord Watson of Invergowrie, Shadow Lords Education Spokesperson, commended the concessions made by the Minister, as well as the cross-party planning and execution of key amendments, which he hoped would give the government pause for thought.

He noted that an amendment on the details of the lifelong learning entitlement was still absent but chose not to press the Minister on this. He added they were also awaiting details of Sharia student finance for both higher education and further education to be announced as part of the spending review, as well as an announcement on fees.

Baroness Barran moved the motion that the Bill now pass. The Minister assured the House that she discussed and would continue to discuss details of their debates with her ministerial colleagues. Bill passed and sent to the Commons.

You can find details of the Bill here and read a transcript of the debate here.
Lords Question on Music and arts in Education Settings

On Monday 25 October, Lord McNicol of West Kilbride asked the government what plans they have to ensure music and the arts are prioritised in schools and other educational settings in England.

Lord McNicol opened his remarks by stating that there had been a 50% reduction in arts subjects at universities over recent years. He noted that the creative industries contribute over £11 billion a year to the UK economy and therefore asked what plans the government had to ensure that the number of pupils studying drama and music does not drop any further. Minister Baroness Barran responded that the number doing vocational and technical qualifications in music had risen by 90% between 2017 and 2020.

Baroness Bull (CB) relayed rumours that the government are considering further limiting the study of creative arts degrees because of their lower salary outcomes and asked if the Minister agreed that salary data was not the only way to assess value.

The Minister agreed that qualifications should be looked at more broadly than financial and earnings potential, but that the significant skills shortage in STEM subjects needs to be met.

You can read a transcript of the question here.

Spending review and Autumn budget

On Wednesday 27 October Chancellor of the Exchequer Rt Hon Rishi Sunak delivered the Budget and Spending Review 2021 ‘A Stronger Economy for the British People’ to parliament.

The Spending Review announced the settlement for the Department for Education which sees total spending increase to £86.7 billion by 2024-25, a real-terms growth of 2% per year from 2021-22. Commitments to the core schools budget, early years and skills were given, but none given on higher education. The Chancellor reconfirmed a commitment to the lifelong loan entitlement (LLE) and the expansion of the Lifetime Skills Guarantee to provide Level 3 courses for adults and scale up Skills Bootcamps.

The Chancellor reiterated the government’s ambitions for the UK to be a science superpower numerous times throughout his speech but confirmed that although the £22 billion target for R&D funding was still in place, the timescale had been pushed back to 2026-27. Public spending on R&D will increase to £20 billion by 2024-25, the end of the parliament. Combining direct spending on R&D with tax relief support, total R&D support as a proportion of GDP will likely increase from 0.7% in 2018 to 1.1% by 2024-25. Innovate UK’s annual budget is also to increase to £1.1bn by 2024-25, from £0.7bn in 2021-22.

R&D tax credits featured prominently in the Budget, with the Chancellor announcing that qualifying expenditure would be expanded to include data and cloud costs alongside refocusing R&D tax reliefs towards innovation in the UK. The Budget document also confirmed funding will be made available to fund full association to Horizon Europe but would be directed to UK government R&D programmes, including with a focus on international partnerships, in the case we are unable to associate.

On international mobility, funding was confirmed for the next three years of the Turing Scheme, including £110 million for the next academic year, 2022-23. No further details have been released at this stage. The Chancellor announced that the government will launch the Scale-up, High Potential Individual and Global Business Mobility visas in spring 2022 to attract highly skilled people are support inward investment.

Finally, the Chancellor pointed to a new Global Talent Network that will be launched in 2022, working with business and research institutions to identify UK skills needs within science and technology and source talent from overseas campuses and research institutions.

You can read a transcript of the financial statement here.
Education Committee session on ‘Universities and the Pandemic’ – first panel

On Wednesday 27 October the Education Committee held a one-off session on ‘universities and the pandemic’, with oral evidence given by Professor Liz Barnes, Vice-Chancellor of Staffordshire University, Professor Tansy Jessop, Pro Vice-Chancellor at the University of Bristol and Jo Grady, General Secretary of the University and College Union (UCU).

The first half of the session was dominated by questions about the University of Bristol’s decision to terminate the employment of Professor David Miller, with committee members questioning both the universities’ policies to protect Jewish students and UCU’s response to the case.

Questions then turned to panellists’ views on the utility of the Freedom of Speech (Higher Education) Bill. Jo Grady questioned why this was the government’s priority and Professor Barnes and Professor Jessop raised concerns about the interaction of the proposed Office for Student complaints system with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) and the use of the statutory tort.

The Chair, Robert Halfon MP, asked about universities’ progress on social mobility to which Professor Barnes outlined the outreach work her university does with the YMCA, mature students and others from underrepresented backgrounds. The positive impact of blended learning on commuter and mature students was also covered.

All panellists clearly made the case for blended learning, stressing that although the cost of investing in technology was high, it benefitted students to retain some elements of virtual teaching alongside face-to-face interaction.

Several panellists questioned UCU’s previous decision to hold strike action during the pandemic, to which Jo Grady confirmed it was balloted before the start of the pandemic and ran through statistics on pay gaps and insecure working conditions. Senior pay was also raised, with Professor Barnes and Professor Jessop stating pay was set by governors and reflected responsibility levels.

You can read a transcript of the debate here.

Education Committee session on ‘Universities and the Pandemic’ – second panel

The second panel with Higher and Further Education Minister, Rt Hon Michelle Donelan MP, similarly started with a discussion on free speech, including whether there would be financial support available for complainants to take universities to court using the statutory tort of the Higher Education (Free Speech) Bill. The minister confirmed the main route to redress would be free via the new Free Speech Champion. Discussion then turned to antisemitism on campus and adoption of the IHRA definition, as well as anti-black racism.

Several questions were asked on access and participation, to which the Minister spoke about the new OfS Director of Fair Access and Participation and cited good examples of university-school partnerships. She also spoke about ‘beefing up’ the Baker Clause to empower teachers to encourage disadvantaged students into routes such as degree apprenticeships. Ways to encourage universities and businesses to offer this provision was then discussed.

The Minister was broadly positive about online learning and gave examples of where it had enhanced teaching. She recognised misreporting in the media, but said it should not be used to cut costs and would write to universities about online provision in the coming weeks. In answer to questions on student mental health, the minister outlined spending on transition support and Student Space. Notably, she also highlighted UUK’s Stepchange work and celebrated the work of universities to support students during the pandemic.

Finally, on quality and value, the minister outlined that she would work with the new Director of Fair Access and Participation to enhance the information available to applicants, citing a specific OfS data set named PROCEED, which she said would be a powerful tool for students.

You can read a transcript of the debate here.
Forthcoming business

Education oral questions

On Monday 1 November at 2:30pm, Secretary of State for Education, the Rt Hon Nadhim Zahawi MP and his ministerial team will answer questions in the House of Commons.

Questions tabled include
- The impact of the reductions in funding for arts courses (Chi Onwurah MP, Lab)
- Support for universities and students to make up for lost learning experiences (Paul Blomfield MP, Lab)
- Increasing access to opportunities for overseas study (John Howell MP, Con)

You can find a list of the questions tabled here and watch the oral questions here.

ARIA Bill Lords Second Reading

On Tuesday 2 November, the Advanced Research and Invention Agency Bill will receive its Second Reading in the House of Lords.

You can find details of the Bill here and watch the debate here.

Economic Affairs Committee session with Chancellor, Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP

On Tuesday 2 November at 3pm, the Economic Affairs Committee will be holding a session with Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP.

You can watch the meeting here.

Ten-Minute Rule Motion on Schools and Educational Settings

On Wednesday 3 November at 1pm, Education Committee Chair, Robert Halfon MP, will put forward a Ten-Minute Rule Motion on Schools and Educational Settings (Essential Infrastructure and Opening During Emergencies).

You can watch the motion here.

Education Committee session with the Education Secretary, Rt Hon Nadhim Zahawi MP

On Wednesday 3 November at 9:30am, the Secretary of State for Education, Rt Hon Nadhim Zahawi MP, and Susan Acland-Hood, Permanent Secretary, Department for Education will be in front of the Education Committee. The agenda for the meeting has not yet been announced.

You can watch the session here.
Written Questions

Chevening Scholarships Programme

Kim Johnson (Liverpool, Riverside): To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what steps she is taking to ensure the safe evacuation of the Afghan Chevening Scholars Alumni group. [59109]

James Cleverly (Braintree): Between 15 and 29 August, the UK evacuated over 15,000 people from Afghanistan. Approximately 500 of these are special cases of particularly vulnerable Afghans, which includes Chevening scholars and their dependants. Throughout August and September, the Chevening Secretariat has been in regular contact with all Afghan Chevening scholars and their families in the UK, and has been liaising with universities, local authorities and the Home Office to help scholars access support.

The Afghan Citizen Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) was announced by the Home Office in August and will provide those put at risk by recent events in Afghanistan with a route to safety. The ACRS is one of the most generous schemes in our country’s history under which we will welcome up to 5,000 vulnerable Afghans over the next year and up to a total of 20,000 in the coming years.

Freedom of Speech – costs of court action

Dr Julian Lewis (New Forest East): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make it his policy (a) that the costs of any court action against (i) educational establishments and (ii) student unions which are found to have failed to protect freedom of speech are borne by the Government and not the individual; and (b) to permit withdrawal, under his direction, of public funding from such establishments. [62562]

Michelle Donelan (Chippenham): The new Office for Students (OfS) complaints scheme to be established by the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill will provide an accessible, cost-free route for individuals to complain against a registered higher education provider or students’ union, where they have suffered adverse consequences as a result of a breach of the new freedom of speech and academic freedom duties. The government expects that the vast majority of complainants will choose this route before considering going to court, as there are no costs involved in bringing a complaint.

Individuals will also have the right to seek damages in the courts. If a provider or students’ union is found by the courts to have breached their duties, the court may order that they pay the costs of the claimant.

The OfS will have the power to issue sanctions to higher education providers where there has been a breach of the new freedom of speech registration conditions (which require compliance with the new duties). These include financial penalties, as well as suspension and the ultimate sanction of de-registration, effectively depriving the provider of access to public funds. The OfS will also be able to issue monetary penalties against students’ unions found to be in breach of their freedom of speech duties.

University ranking tables

Lord Patten: To ask Her Majesty’s Government what assessment they have made of (1) the tables published by different UK organisations ranking universities, and (2) the availability of independent oversight or verification of the accuracy of such tables. [HL2954]

Baroness Barran: There is a variety of ranking systems and information sources which are published independently of government which are not verified. The Higher Education Statistics Agency (the designated data body for England), collects and makes openly available standardised data about UK higher education providers, so that it can be re-used by third parties.
The government's focus is on ensuring all higher education providers deliver a high-quality academic experience. 'Discover Uni' is owned and operated by the UK higher education funding and regulatory bodies and is an official, reliable source of information to guide student choices. The Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework is the Office for Student's scheme for rating the quality of higher education in England, as part of its wider quality regime to help ensure all students benefit from high-quality provision.

Mathematical Sciences

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: To ask Her Majesty's Government (1) how much they have spent on mathematical sciences at higher education institutions in the UK, and (2) how this compares to the international average. [HL2931]

Lord Callanan: The UK is a world leader in Mathematics, accounting for the 5th largest share of publications but the third largest share of the top 1% and 10% most cited publications.

Between Financial Year 2015-2016 and September 2021, EPSRC committed £259.9m to research grants Mathematical Sciences. This includes commitment from the Additional Funding Programme. At this current time, EPSRC are unable to make a direct comparison to international averages.

Following the Government's announcement in January 2020 to invest additional funding into Mathematical Sciences, UKRI has awarded around £104 million of additional funding to the discipline, over and above EPSRC's core Mathematical Sciences Theme budget. The additional funding has covered institutes, small and large research grants, fellowships, doctoral studentships and postdoctoral awards.

On the 27 October 2021, the Government will announce the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review. Once that has concluded, BEIS and UKRI will set out how we meet the commitment to invest additional funding into Mathematical sciences in forthcoming years, as part of the allocations process.

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: To ask Her Majesty's Government what is the breakdown of (1) actual, and (2) planned, expenditure of their £300 million investment in the mathematical sciences. [HL2934]

Lord Callanan: The UK is a world leader in Mathematics, accounting for the 5th largest share of publications but the third largest share of the top 1% and 10% most cited publications.

Between Financial Year 2015-2016 and September 2021, EPSRC committed £259.9m to research grants Mathematical Sciences. This includes commitment from the Additional Funding Programme. At this current time, EPSRC are unable to make a direct comparison to international averages.

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On the 27 October 2021, the Government will announce the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review. Once that has concluded, BEIS and UKRI will set out how we meet the commitment to invest additional funding into Mathematical sciences in forthcoming years, as part of the allocations process.

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: To ask Her Majesty's Government how much they have invested in mathematical sciences in each higher education institution in the UK for (1) teaching, and (2) research. [HL2935]
Lord Callanan: The UK is a world leader in Mathematics, accounting for the 5th largest share of publications but the third largest share of the top 1% and 10% most cited publications.

Between Financial Year 2015-2016 and September 2021, EPSRC committed £259.9m to research grants Mathematical Sciences. This includes commitment from the Additional Funding Programme. At this current time, EPSRC are unable to make a direct comparison to international averages.

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On the 27 October 2021, the Government will announce the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review. Once that has concluded, BEIS and UKRI will set out how we meet the commitment to invest additional funding into Mathematical sciences in forthcoming years, as part of the allocations process.

Support for mathematics research in universities

Andrew Rosindell (Romford): To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what plans he has to support mathematics research in universities. [56346]

George Freeman (Mid Norfolk): The UK is a world leader in mathematics. British mathematicians publish a large volume of highly regarded work. When compared to international colleagues, British mathematicians have the 5th largest share of publications in the world. When looking at the top 1% of most cited publications, UK mathematicians are responsible for the third largest share.

Since January 2020, UKRI has awarded £104 million of additional funding into mathematical sciences, over and above EPSRC’s core Mathematical Sciences Theme budget. The additional funding has funded institutes, small and large research grants, fellowships, doctoral studentships, and postdoctoral awards.

Future funding for mathematical sciences will be decided as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review process.

Post-18 Education and Funding Review

Zarah Sultana (Coventry South): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the Answer of 21 September 2021 to Question 49129, on Students: Loans, when his Department plans to publish the conclusion to the Post-18 education and funding review. [59079]

Michelle Donelan (Chippenham): Further to the Interim Conclusion to the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding published in January of this year, we continue to consider the recommendations made by the independent panel that reported to the review, and plan to conclude it in full in due course.

Student loan repayment threshold

Dr Rupa Huq (Ealing Central and Acton): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of maintaining the student loan repayment threshold at its current level in England. [59898]
Michelle Donelan (Chippenham): As part of the wider Review of Post-18 Education and Funding, we continue to consider carefully the recommendations made by the independent panel that reported to the review, including those around fees and funding for higher education. We plan to set out a full conclusion to the Review in due course.

Charlotte Nichols (Warrington North): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he plans to lower the student loan repayment threshold from £27,000 to £23,000. [56521]

Michelle Donelan (Chippenham): We are committed to a sustainable funding model for our higher education system that supports high value provision, meets the skills needs of the country and maintains the world-class reputation of UK higher education.

The government is considering its response to the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding carefully, including a range of options to ensure that student finance continues to deliver value for money for both students and the taxpayer, and will set out a full conclusion in due course.

Sharia-compliant finance

Ms Lyn Brown (West Ham): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent progress the Government has made on providing a sharia-compliant alternative student finance system. [58354]

Michelle Donelan (Chippenham): I refer the hon. Member for West Ham to the answer I gave on 18 October 2021 to Question 53884.

Gill Furniss (Sheffield, Brightside and Hillsborough): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when he plans to introduce an alternative student finance model for higher education students. [58980]

Michelle Donelan (Chippenham): I refer the hon. Members for Sheffield, Brightside and Hillsborough, and Ealing Central and Acton to the answer I gave on 18 October 2021 to Question 53884.

Dr Rupa Huq (Ealing Central and Acton): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what progress his Department has made on introducing alternative student finance options for Muslim students. [58971]

Michelle Donelan (Chippenham): I refer the hon. Members for Sheffield, Brightside and Hillsborough, and Ealing Central and Acton to the answer I gave on 18 October 2021 to Question 53884.

Match funding for COP26 university scholarships

Geraint Davies (Swansea West): To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, if he will make it his policy to match funding for COP26 scholarships recently announced by universities. [59704]
Greg Hands (Chelsea and Fulham): The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has indicated that it will not be possible to answer this question within the usual time period. An answer is being prepared and will be provided as soon as it is available.

Support for students diagnosed with long covid

Kim Leadbeater (Batley and Spen): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps he is taking to help ensure that students who are diagnosed with Long Covid receive the support they require. [56624]

Michelle Donelan (Chippenham): Higher education (HE) providers are autonomous institutions and have a duty of care to students when delivering services, including the provision of pastoral support, and taking steps to protect the health, safety and wellbeing of students.

Throughout the COVID-19 outbreak universities have bolstered their support services to students and we expect this to continue.

Long COVID should be treated in line with other medium to long term health conditions. This means that setting, including HE providers, should within reason, be making allowances for staff and students with this condition where it is affecting their ability to perform and undertake their studies.

The NHS has published guidance to those recovering from long COVID at: https://www.yourcovidrecovery.nhs.uk/what-is-covid-19/long-covid/

If students have concerns about the support they are receiving, they should first raise them with their HE provider. If their concerns remain unresolved, students at providers in England or Wales can ask the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for Higher Education to consider their complaint.

The Office for Students (OfS) does not get involved in individual student complaints, that is for the relevant HE provider and possibly the OIA. However, students can notify the OfS of issues that may be of regulatory interest to it. These are called 'notifications'. The OfS uses this information as part of its regulatory monitoring activity and keep higher education providers under review to ensure that they comply with the ongoing conditions of registration. The OfS has produced a guide for students to support them in this process, which is available here.

Pensions

Chi Onwurah (Newcastle upon Tyne Central): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what recent discussions he has had with Universities UK on the ongoing absence of an agreed deal on pensions with the University and College Union. [59783]

Michelle Donelan (Chippenham): The Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) is a private pension scheme. The government has no direct role in relation to the USS, beyond legislation that applies to all work-based pension schemes as regulated by the Pensions Regulator.

The Pensions Regulator is currently working with the USS, Universities UK and a range of other stakeholders as they work to find a long-term solution to the funding challenges faced by the USS.

Higher education providers that offer the USS are responsible for the pension provision offered to their staff.
Long-term ability of chemistry departments to develop the talent pipeline

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi (Slough): To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, what steps he is taking to protect the long-term ability of university chemistry departments to develop the chemistry talent pipeline. [57275]

George Freeman (Mid Norfolk): The Government is committed to cementing the UK’s status as a global science superpower, and recognises that great people are at the heart of great research and development (R&D).

In July, we published the R&D People and Culture Strategy which sets a long-term course for research talent development and underlines our goal to ensure the UK is the most exciting place in the world for top research and innovation talent.

The Strategy sets out the actions that government and the sector, including universities, will take to ensure the UK R&D workforce has the capability and capacity it needs both now and in the future - across all disciplines.

Contribution of higher education related exports to the UK economy

Emily Thornberry (Islington South and Finsbury): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what methodology his Department uses to evaluate the contribution of higher education related exports to the UK economy. [56440]

Michelle Donelan (Chippenham): The department publishes annual experimental statistics on UK revenue from education related exports and transnational education activity.

The latest release, published in December 2020, estimated total UK revenue from education related exports and transnational activity in 2018 to be £23.3 billion, of which £16 billion (69%) of the total value came from higher education activity.

The statistical release, along with the technical note detailing the methodology and data sources used can be found here:

Through the government’s International Education Strategy, and the 2021 update to the Strategy, we have committed to providing a clearer picture of Education Exports data. The department continues to work closely with the Department for International Trade on this matter and as set out in the 2021 Update, a roadmap is being developed focusing on short/medium/long-term steps to improve data. The update can be found here.

Emily Thornberry (Islington South and Finsbury) : To ask the Secretary of State for Education, when the Government last conducted an evaluation of international higher education students’ contribution to the UK economy. [56439]

Michelle Donelan (Chippenham) : The department publishes annual experimental statistics on UK revenue from education related exports and transnational education activity.

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**Investment in UK universities by hostile states**

**Dr Julian Lewis (New Forest East):** To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will list (a) any powers he has to prevent investment in UK universities by hostile states and (b) the legal basis for each of those powers. [58710]

**Michelle Donelan (Chippenham):** We are recognised across the world for our higher education system and we encourage the sector to collaborate with international partners. However, to be open, we must also be secure, and we will not accept collaborations which compromise our national security.

On the 29 April 2021, the National Security and Investment (NSI) Act was passed. The NSI Act enables the UK Government to protect all sectors, including research and Higher Education Institutions from hostile foreign interference through mandating notification and requiring approval of investments and other acquisitions in key areas. It also extends the UK Government’s screening powers to include acquisitions of control over assets such as intellectual and tangible property. Universities and other research organisations should have regard to the NSI Act when collaborating with other parties to acquire, sell or develop entities and assets.

In addition, I commissioned Universities UK to produce comprehensive security guidelines to advise universities on engaging in secure international collaborations published in October 2020, ’Managing risks in internationalisation: security-related issues’. Among the recommendations in the guidelines were that due diligence be conducted on all international partnerships.

**Student finance funding for those whose education has been disrupted by international conflict**

**Emma Hardy (Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle):** To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether he plans to allow people whose higher education has been disrupted as a result of international conflict to apply for funding with student finance. [57294]

**Michelle Donelan (Chippenham):** The government has a longstanding and proud tradition of providing a safe haven to those who have no choice but to leave their home country because of endangerment to their lives or to those of their families. Student support for higher education courses is available to persons granted international protection by the Home Office, including those recognised as refugees or who have been granted humanitarian protection, stateless leave, Calais leave or section 67 leave. Such persons are exempt from the three-year ordinary residence requirement.
Sector News

National Student Survey 2022

On Monday 25 October, the Office for Students published guidance to set out the arrangements for the National Student Survey (NSS) 2022 and the action required from all participating universities, colleges and other higher education provider by the 26 November 2021.

You can find the guidance here.

Department for Education Coronavirus Guidance Update

On Tuesday 26 October, the Department for Education published new guidance for higher education providers undertaking education or placements abroad, including the Turing Scheme, Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps, during the coronavirus pandemic. The guidance for students and providers covers the government’s red list, hotel quarantine, and the availability of support for disadvantaged students.

You can find the guidance here.

Office for National Statistics Student Experiences Insights Survey (SEIS)

On Wednesday 17 October, the Office for National Statistics published experimental statistics from its Student Experiences Insights Survey (SEIS) in England. The release includes information on the mental health and well-being, behaviours, plans, and opinions of first year higher education students in the context of guidance on the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

You can find the release here.