

Political Affairs Digest

29 June – 03 July 2026

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 the team:

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Parliamentary business

Reforming university student finance – HoL Oral Question

On Tuesday 30 June, Lord Hain (Labour) asked the Government, during oral questions, ‘what plans they have, if any, to reform university student finance?’.

Responding on behalf of the Government, Skills Minister, Baroness Smith of Malvern, listed the action that the Government was taking including "capping interest rates to protect Plan 2 and Plan 3 borrowers from inflation shocks", "increasing the plan 2 repayment threshold twice", "future proofing maintenance loans" and "reintroducing maintenance grants in 2028".

Lord Hain's supplementary question went on to ask if the "Government would implement a graduate tax at 2%" stating it was "much lower than the 9% now compulsory, deducted from graduate workers above the repayment threshold".

Baroness Smith responded by stating that a "graduate tax would dramatically increase upfront costs for taxpayers" as well as "incentivising graduates to move overseas after completed study" and concluded with the remarks, "I suspect this is why no country has ever financed higher education in this way".

A summary of the topics covered in the supplementary questions can be found below.

Quality of Degrees

When asked by the Earl of Clancarty (crossbencher) about the how the Government is measuring the quality of degrees, Baroness Malvern responded by highlighting the new approach by the OfS, the ability to measure the returns of individual courses and stated "it is for those reasons why we will take action against those courses which are not providing the returns or the experience that students should expect"

Automatic Indexation of Tuition Fees

Lord Johnson of Marylebone (Conservative) took the opportunity to ask about the legislation process for the automatic indexation of tuition fees. Baroness Smith stated, "The Government has already taken action two years in a row to increase the tuition fee cap - which we will continue to do up to the point where we can legislate to index that".

Financial Situation of the Higher Education Sector

Lord Mohammed of Tinsley (Lib Dems) asked how the Government is approaching the higher education financial state of play, asking "when will this Government bring forward a long -term financial strategy that puts education on a more strong and secure footing?". Baroness Smith replied that "universities are

independent of Government and responsible for managing their finances" and that "it is this Government that has taken action to secure the financial future for our world leading higher education sector". She further noted that the Government has increased tuition fee caps in line with forecast inflation in 2026, 2027 and 2028, as well as appointing Professor Edward Peck as Chair of OfS. She also emphasised the fact that the "tuition fee increase will bring £6 billion into the sector over the next few years".

Student Debt in England

Lord Sikkha (Labour) asked about the impact of student loans repayments on the "ability of people to buy a home, start a business or start a family". Baroness Smith stated that "the income contingent nature of student loan repayments are protected and the fact that 30% of student loans will never be repaid and are subsidised by this Government, I think, is a legitimate subsidy for students undertaking higher education and investment in our higher education system, and in the future of those that go to university".

The full transcript can be [found here](#).

Antisemitism on university campuses – Westminster Hall debate

On Tuesday 30 June, at 2.30pm, Mark Sewards MP (Labour) led a Westminster Hall debate on antisemitism on university campuses.

Key areas of debate included the rise and normalisation of antisemitic incidents on campuses, the link between pro-Palestine marches and attacks on Jewish students, as well as the need to protect freedom of speech. Institutions including Keele University, University College London and City St. Georges' - University of London, were all highlighted as positive case studies of good practice.

The full transcript can be [found here](#).

The future affordability and quality of higher education – HoL debate

On Thursday 2 July, Baroness Deech (Crossbench) led a House of Lords debate on the 'Future affordability and quality of higher education'.

Speaking in the debate, former UUK Chief Executive, Baroness Warwick (Lab) paid tribute to the higher education sector as well as to UUK's latest initiative, 'Future Universities'.

"However, let us be equally clear: this [higher education] is not a system in decline; it is a system under strain, but one that remains one of the country's greatest national assets. Our universities are engines of growth. They sit at the heart of the Government's ambitions for productivity, innovation and regional development.

"I have been pleased to see that Universities UK recognises this need [higher education renewal]. Following on from the work of its blueprint, published two years ago, Universities UK has now embarked on a programme of work that it is calling "future universities". It is asking how the university system needs to change and adapt to deliver what the nation needs in the next decades. As a former chief executive of Universities UK, I am pleased to say that it is not afraid of criticism but is thinking hard about how the system can respond to it."

Another helpful intervention came from Lord Patel (cross bencher) who touched on the benefits of research and innovation,

"The value of universities is enormous. We do blue-sky research, and universities contribute to early innovations and help build billion-pound industries. For the population of 0.8%, we have a publication record of about 6%. Some 60% of the publications are international collaborations. Of the £72 billion that the United Kingdom spends on R&D—which is 2.64% of GDP—higher education is responsible for 24% of all of it, which is £17.1 billion a year. What is amazing is that that is the highest of the OECD countries. Japan, for instance, is the next highest, but it is at 11%, compared with 24% for higher institutions in the United Kingdom."

In addition, Lord Mohammed of Tinsely (Liberal Democrat) made reference to the financial difficulties that the sector is currently facing,

"For us, the starting point is straightforward. Higher education is not merely a private benefit; it is a public good. Universities educate the teachers, doctors, nurses, engineers, scientists and entrepreneurs upon whom our society depends. They drive research, regenerate communities and contribute billions to our economy. Any debate about affordability must therefore consider the financial burdens on students and the long-term sustainability of the institutions themselves. The current system is failing on both counts".

The full transcript can be found [here](#).

Forthcoming business

Lords European Affairs Committee

On Tuesday 7 July, the House of Lords European Affairs Committee will hear evidence on Erasmus +.

Witnesses:

- Vivienne Stern MBE, CEO at Universities UK
- Emma Meredith, Director of Skills Policy and Global Engagement at Association of Colleges (AoC)

You can watch the session live from 11.00am [here](#)

Education Committee – oral evidence session

On Tuesday 7 July, the Education Committee will hear evidence on the use of artificial intelligence and EdTech in education:

Witnesses:

- Will Akrigg, UK Government Affairs Manager at The King's Trust
- Kester Brewin, Associate Director at Institute for the Future of Work
- Josh Hillman, Director of Education at The Nuffield Foundation
- Patrick Milnes, Head of Policy: People & Work at British Chambers of Commerce
- Professor Rose Luckin CBE, Professor Emerita at University College London
- David Monis-Weston, Head of EdTech at Purposeful Ventures
- John Roberts, CEO at Oak National Academy
- Professor Neil Selwyn, Professor in the Faculty of Arts at Monash University

You can watch the session live from 10.00am [here](#)

Lords – oral question

On Wednesday 8 July, Baroness Royall of Blaisdon (Labour) will ask a question about safe refugee routes for students from Afghanistan, Cameroon, Myanmar and Sudan

Written questions and statements

Department for Education: VAT

Mr Jonathan Brash MP (Hartlepool) (Lab): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the current VAT arrangements for further education colleges.

Josh MacAlister MP (Whitehaven and Workington) (Lab): While VAT is a matter for His Majesty's Treasury, the department recognises that the VAT status of further education (FE) providers remains an issue of interest to the sector. The government continues to look into the VAT position of FE colleges, noting my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister's commitment to look into this issue when it was raised at the Liaison Committee in December 2025. The government keeps all taxes under review and any changes would be announced at a fiscal event.

Department for Science, Innovation and Technology: Astronomy and Nuclear Physics: Finance

Rt Hon Valerie Vaz MP (Walsall and Bloxwich) (Lab): To ask the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of the levels of planned higher education spending on particle physics, astronomy and nuclear physics science on that sector. (13791) (Department for Science, Innovation and Technology)

Kanishka Narayan MP (Vale of Glamorgan) (Lab): UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) supports particle physics, astronomy, and nuclear physics (PPAN) via the Science and Technology Facilities Council's (STFC) PPAN programme. STFC spending on the PPAN programme was £198 million in 2023/24 and £199 million in 2025/26. These figures reflect direct programme funding; further investment is delivered through international subscriptions and infrastructure, which are managed separately.

More broadly, the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) has committed a record £58.5 billion investment in R&D over the next 4 years, including £38.6 billion for UKRI. STFC's core budget is being maintained, rising from £835 million in 2025/26 to £842 million in 2029/30. Applicant-led research grants will increase from £83 million in 2026/27 to £90 million in 2029/30.

STFC faces cost pressures from rising energy, inflation, foreign exchange, and ambitious commitments from the previous SR and must find savings relative to forecast operational costs. STFC has worked with the sector to model different spending scenarios for its PPAN portfolio. The impacts of different modelled scenarios across the broad and diverse range of STFC-funded facilities and programmes will be considered alongside feedback from the sector to inform final decisions.

DSIT has asked UKRI to ensure that its specific investment decisions are informed by meaningful consultation with the scientific research community and a robust assessment of potential consequences for the UK's scientific capability, research institutions and international standing.

Home Office: Overseas Students: Scholarships

Josh Babarinde MP (Eastbourne) (Lib Dem): To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to ensure that students from countries experiencing armed conflict who have been awarded scholarships at UK universities can take up their places; and what steps her Department is taking to provide assistance with (a) visas, (b) travel, and (c) provision for their dependants.

Mike Tapp MP (Dover and Deal) (Lab): The UK welcomes students affected by conflict who wish to come to the UK through existing immigration routes. All individuals, including eligible dependants, must meet the requirements of the Immigration Rules and are subject to robust security and visa checks.

The UK has a proud history of offering protection to those most in need. In the Restoring Order and Control statement published last year, alongside the measures to get control of the asylum system, this Government committed to introduce new safe and legal routes to offer sanctuary to those genuinely fleeing war and persecution from around the world.

As part of this, we will be introducing a new route for refugee and displaced students to study in the UK, helping talented refugees to continue their studies and realise their potential.

As confirmed in the Foreign Secretary's statement of 24 June 2026, the Government has renewed support for high achieving students from Gaza and their eligible dependants to take up fully funded scholarships at UK universities for the 2026/27 academic year.

Department for Education: Universities: Admissions

Lord Addington (Lib Dem): To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to restrict university entrance to those who have passed GCSE English or equivalent. (HL1079) (Department for Education)

Baroness Smith of Malvern: The government maintains the higher education (HE) system under review to ensure it delivers good outcomes for students and value for money for the taxpayer.

The Office for Students identified some providers recruiting students with insufficient English language proficiency to undertake the rigorous studies that an HE course demands. Students must not be mis-sold courses they are not equipped to undertake.

As announced on 25 June, we will consult in the autumn to canvass views on whether and how the government might introduce a minimum English language requirement for accessing student finance. We will be testing how the government should balance robust standards with supporting access and participation for students from different backgrounds and protected characteristics. We are keen to hear views from a wide range of groups and people, and we will carefully consider the equalities impact before making any changes.

Department for Education: Debts: Students

Lord Hain (Lab): To ask His Majesty's Government on what basis total university student debt is not counted against the public sector borrowing requirement.

Baroness Smith of Malvern: The fiscal impact of student loans is measured by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). The statistics the ONS publishes are independent, following methodologies designed in consultation with the international statistical community and in line with the European System of Accounts.

The ONS treats student loans partly as loans, since some portion will be repaid, and partly as capital transfers, since some will not.

Under this partitioned loan-transfer approach, what counts to public sector net borrowing and public sector net financial liabilities is the transfer less modified interest, the interest accruing on the loan portion.

Ian Sollom MP (St Neots and Mid Cambridgeshire) (Lib Dem): To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, whether he has assessed the potential merits of allowing Growth and Skills Levy funding to be used for Higher Technical Qualifications, particularly for adult learners.

Andrew Western MP (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab): This government is investing over £18 billion per year in post-16 education and skills and is delivering record investment this parliament, committing an additional £1.2 billion a year by the 2028–29 financial year to support around 65,000 more learners annually.

Growth and Skills Levy funding is intended to support the training and upskilling of employees. It can be used to fund apprenticeship training and assessment and, since April 2026, Apprenticeship Units. Apprenticeship Units are short courses to help employers upskill their workforces quickly and flexibly and there are now ten units available for employers to use.

Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs) are eligible for the higher education student finance offer on the same basis as undergraduate degree courses, for full-time and part-time students starting an HTQ that is a

minimum of a year in length and is delivered by an OfS-registered provider. HTQs that do not meet this requirement are funded via Adult Learner Loans.

Lord Storey (Lib Dem): To ask His Majesty's Government what action they are taking to ensure that students in Gaza who have been offered a scholarship to study in UK universities are able to do so.

Baroness Smith of Malvern: On 24 June 2026, my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs announced in a Written Ministerial Statement (Statement UIN HCWS144) that the government will provide support to enable eligible students in Gaza to depart and take up their places at UK universities for the 2026/27 academic year.

Department for Education: Universities: Debts

Lord Hain (Lab): To ask His Majesty's Government what are the twenty universities with the largest financial deficits. (HL1002) (Department for Education)

Baroness Smith of Malvern: The Office for Students (OfS), the independent regulator of higher education in England, is responsible for monitoring the sector's financial sustainability. Its most recent report on the sector's financial health, published in May 2026, found that 35.8 per cent of providers recorded a deficit in 2024/25, an improvement on earlier forecasts of 44.2 per cent, however, deficits alone do not provide a complete picture of financial health

Key financial indicators are also published through the Higher Education Statistics Agency and in providers' own financial statements

The department does not hold information on the twenty universities with the largest deficits. While the OfS collects provider-level data, it does not routinely rank institutions.

Department for Education: Universities: Research

Dr Beccy Cooper MP (Worthing West) (Lab): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what support her Department is giving to research-intensive universities. (10889) (Department for Education)

Josh MacAlister MP (Whitehaven and Workington) (Lab): The government recognises the vital role that universities play in supporting the UK's world-leading research base and delivering the Industrial Strategy, and is therefore investing a record £86 billion in research and development between 2026/27 and 2029/30, the largest ever investment made by any UK Government, to help fund the vital research our universities lead the world in.

Additionally, the government provides funding through the Strategic Priorities Grant (SPG) annually to support teaching and students in higher education (HE). The total recurrent (programme) SPG funding allocation for the current 2025/26 academic year is £1.3 billion. Research-intensive universities that are on the approved Office of Students (fee cap) register will benefit from all SPG funding streams for which they are eligible.

The government also provides over £11.1 billion in subsidised fee loans to support all universities, including research-intensives.

Department for Education: Universities: Antisemitism

James Naish MP (Rushcliffe) (Lab): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what support her Department provides to universities seeking to deliver antisemitism awareness training and initiatives that celebrate Jewish life on campus. (11018) (Department for Education)

Josh MacAlister MP (Whitehaven and Workington) (Lab): The department is supporting the sector to tackle antisemitism and ensure Jewish students can participate fully in university life. We have committed £7 million to the Tackling Antisemitism in Education programme, which includes support for universities to improve understanding of antisemitism, respond effectively to incidents, and strengthen policies and procedures that promote respect and tolerance.

As part of this programme, the Union of Jewish Students has been appointed to deliver training and resources for universities between 2025 and 2028. Palace Yard will also be commencing a scholarship programme, to include university staff, in the autumn.

The department has also provided £500,000 to University Jewish Chaplaincy to strengthen welfare support for Jewish students.

We expect higher education providers to foster environments in which Jewish students feel safe, welcome and able to celebrate Jewish life on campus, free from discrimination and harassment.

Department for Education: Universities: Antisemitism

James Naish MP (Rushcliffe) (Lab): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of information-sharing arrangements between universities, police forces and relevant Government agencies in tackling antisemitism. (11017) (Department for Education)

Josh MacAlister MP (Whitehaven and Workington) (Lab): The department is clear that antisemitism has no place in higher education (HE).

While the department has not made a formal assessment of the effectiveness of information-sharing arrangements between universities, police forces and government agencies, we are working closely with

partners across government and the sector to keep these arrangements under review.

The department is currently exploring opportunities with the Home Office and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to strengthen local intelligence-sharing and joint working between universities, police forces, Prevent teams and MHCLG area coordinators. This is intended to support earlier identification of risks, improve coordination between partners, and ensure incidents of antisemitism are responded to effectively.

We will continue to work across government, the HE sector and community stakeholders to ensure robust measures are in place to tackle antisemitism and support affected students and staff.

Department for Education: Student Unions: Hate Crime and Radicalism

James Naish MP (Rushcliffe) (Lab): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether her Department plans to add additional regulatory requirements for students' unions in relation to tackling extremism and hate incidents on campus.

Josh MacAlister MP (Whitehaven and Workington) (Lab): The department is clear that all students should be able to study in an environment that is safe and free from harassment and intimidation.

The department is strengthening protections for students and staff from extremism and intimidation on campus through measures announced in March 2026, including enhanced monitoring of providers' Prevent responsibilities by the Office for Students (OfS) and shortly providing updated guidance on managing speakers and events.

The department will continue to work with the higher education sector and the OfS to ensure campuses remain places of open debate and academic freedom, while taking robust action against unlawful hate and extremist activity.

Department for Education: Universities: Hate Crime

James Naish MP (Rushcliffe) (Lab): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether she plans to require universities to report incidents of antisemitism and other hate crimes to the Office for Students.

Josh MacAlister MP (Whitehaven and Workington) (Lab): The government is clear that antisemitism has no place in higher education (HE).

HE providers are autonomous institutions and are responsible for preventing and responding to harassment, hate crime and discrimination. The Office for Students (OfS), as the independent regulator for HE in England, monitors compliance with regulatory requirements.

Universities should maintain clear policies and disciplinary procedures to address antisemitism. On 5 May, my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, called on universities to demonstrate the action they are taking to tackle antisemitism on campus. Institutions are now expected to publish information on levels of antisemitism and the steps taken to address incidents.

Providers should continue to record incidents appropriately, support those affected and refer potential criminal offences to the police where necessary.

Department for Education: Universities: Hate Crime

James Naish MP (Rushcliffe) (Lab): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment her Department has made of the potential merits of introducing enforceable minimum standards for universities' investigation of hate crime incidents. (11003) (Department for Education)

Josh MacAlister MP (Whitehaven and Workington) (Lab): Higher education (HE) providers are autonomous institutions and are responsible for investigating incidents that occur within their communities. The government expects providers to have effective procedures in place to prevent and respond to hate crime, harassment and discrimination.

The department has not made an assessment of the merits of introducing enforceable minimum standards specifically for universities' investigation of hate crime incidents. Providers are already subject to a range of legal and regulatory requirements, including duties under the Equality Act 2010, while the Office for Students (OfS) regulates registered providers in England and monitors compliance with its conditions of registration. The Government will continue to work with the HE sector and the OfS to help ensure that students can study in an environment that is safe, inclusive and free from harassment, hatred and discrimination.

Department for Education: Turing Scheme

Mr Andrew Snowden MP (Fylde) (Con): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what transitional arrangements she plans to put in place for education providers with multi-year international partnerships funded through the Turing Scheme that extend beyond the 2026/27 academic year.

Josh MacAlister MP (Whitehaven and Workington) (Lab): Education providers will, in most cases, be able to continue longstanding international partnerships under Erasmus+, as well as develop new collaborations across a wide network of participating countries. In some sectors, providers will also be able to maintain links beyond Europe, as Erasmus+ allows grant holders to allocate up to 20% of their project funding to support international mobilities to non-associated countries.

The Turing Scheme has always operated on a single-year funding cycle, with no guarantee of multi-year

funding for partnerships. Providers are therefore already accustomed to planning their international activity on a year-by-year basis and adapting to changes in circumstance.

Department for Education: Erasmus+ Programme

Mr Andrew Snowden MP (Fylde) (Con): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the impact of the replacement of the Turing Scheme with Erasmus+ on opportunities for UK students to undertake placements outside Europe.

Josh MacAlister MP (Whitehaven and Workington) (Lab): Erasmus+ will continue to provide opportunities for students to undertake placements outside of Europe.

As part of Erasmus+, grant holders in some sectors can allocate up to 20% of their project funding to support international mobilities to countries that are not associated with the programme.

Erasmus+ also supports global collaboration through partnership projects, with opportunities to involve non-partner countries under certain actions.

Department for Education: Students: Loans

Mr Andrew Snowden MP (Fylde) (Con): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment she has made of the potential impact of technical errors affecting Plan 2 loan balances administered by the Student Loans Company on borrowers; and how many borrowers have been affected.

Josh MacAlister MP (Whitehaven and Workington) (Lab): The two technical errors relating to plan 2 affected 71,000 students and meant 41,000 were not charged enough interest, and 30,000 were charged too much interest. Accounts have now been corrected, meaning that 41,000 students have had their balance increase, and 30,000 have had their balance decrease but regular repayment amounts will remain unchanged. Of the 30,000 accounts which will see their balance decrease, over 3,000 students who have paid off their loans will receive a refund.

Department for Education: Higher Education: Redundancy

Dr Beccy Cooper MP (Worthing West) (Lab): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to help prevent job reductions in higher education.

Josh MacAlister MP (Whitehaven and Workington) (Lab): The Office for Students (OfS), as the independent regulator of higher education (HE) in England, is responsible for monitoring the sector's financial sustainability. Its most recent report on the sector's financial health, published in May 2026, is available at: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/financial-sustainability-of-higher-education-providers->

[in-england-2026/](#).

The OfS report found that 42.7% of HE providers are forecast to be in deficit in 2025/26. However, these deficits alone do not provide a complete picture of an institution's financial health.

The department does not hold information on universities categorised by county, but key information on the financial position of individual providers is publicly available through their published financial statements.

Universities are autonomous and are responsible for their own business and staffing decisions. While the government does not intervene in these matters, we expect universities to engage constructively with their workforce when making decisions that may affect them.

The government remains committed to creating a secure future for our universities so they can deliver for students, taxpayers, workers and the economy. That is why, after being frozen for eight years, we increased tuition fee caps in line with inflation in 2025/26. We are also increasing tuition fee caps in line with forecast inflation in 2026/27 and 2027/28. We will then legislate, when parliamentary time allows, to increase tuition fee caps automatically for future academic years.

Department for Education: Student Unions: Standards

James Naish MP (Rushcliffe) (Lab): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what discussions she has had with the Charity Commission on oversight of students' unions' compliance with their legal duties.

Josh MacAlister MP (Whitehaven and Workington) (Lab): Students' unions that are registered charities are regulated by the Charity Commission and are required to comply with charity law and fulfil their legal duties as trustees. The department engages regularly with regulators and sector bodies on matters affecting higher education providers and students. In May, department officials met with representatives of the Charity Commission to discuss approaches to the regulation of students' unions. The meeting provided an opportunity for both organisations to share information on their respective roles, powers and responsibilities. The department and the Charity Commission will continue to engage, as appropriate, on matters relating to the regulation and oversight of students' unions.

Department for Education: Religion: Teachers

Dr Ellie Chowns MP (North Herefordshire) (Green): To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what consideration she has given to reinstating the Religious Education Initial Teacher Training bursary for 2026/2027 and future years.

Georgia Gould MP (Queen's Park and Maida Vale) (Lab): Initial teacher training (ITT) bursaries are offered to incentivise more applications to ITT courses. As such, we review bursaries annually to take account of recruitment to date, forecast economic conditions, and assess teacher need in each subject. The purpose of the scheme is to target resources to where the evidence shows need is highest.

Between the 2023/24 and 2025/26 academic years, postgraduate ITT recruitment increased by 71% in religious education (RE). Partly due to this improved recruitment and higher retention of existing teachers, the need for new postgraduate RE trainee teachers has reduced for the 2026/27 academic year. Our 'Get Into Teaching' marketing campaign and one-to-one support service for prospective trainee teachers continues to support RE ITT recruitment. We will also continue to assess the need for trainees across all subjects and review the bursaries on offer prior to announcing the bursary offer for the 2027/28 academic year this autumn.

Home Office: Radicalism: Universities

James Naish MP (Rushcliffe) (Lab): To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment she has made of trends in the level of extremist activity on university campuses since October 2023.

Dame Angela Eagle MP (Wallasey) (Lab): The Government is committed to tackling those who spread views that promote violence and hatred against individuals and communities in our society, and that radicalise others into terrorism.

We remain vigilant to the risk of extremist activity across all parts of society, including in higher education settings where individuals may be particularly exposed to harmful narratives, and we continue to work closely with partners to understand and respond to emerging risks. This includes engagement with local Prevent and Department for Education stakeholders to identify events and speakers of concern and providing advice and assistance in disrupting these where appropriate.

Home Office: Foreign Influence Registration Scheme

Mr Gregory Campbell MP (East Londonderry) (DUP): To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether she plans to publish the Foreign Influence Registration Scheme Annual report before the July Parliamentary Summer recess this year.

Sarah Jones MP (Croydon West) (Lab): The FIRS annual report will be laid in Parliament, as required by the National Security Act (2023).

The annual report will set out, among other things, the number of registrations, the number of information notices issued, the number of persons charged with an offence and the number of persons convicted of an offence.

The first report will be published as soon as practicable after 30 June 2026.

Home Office: Demonstrations: Universities

James Naish MP (Rushcliffe) (Lab): To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether updated public order guidance will be issued to universities and police forces on managing campus protests; and what steps her Department is taking to ensure public order powers are consistently enforced in higher education settings.

Sarah Jones MP (Croydon West) (Lab): Police forces regularly work with protest organisers, local communities and institutions affected by protests to ensure the right to peaceful protest can be balanced against the need to protect the public from serious disruption or harm.

The College of Policing is responsible for providing guidance to police and are operationally independent from Government. The Protest Operational Advice Document contains operational advice for frontline policing and is regularly updated to include all public order powers.

Advice on protest and free speech for universities is provided by the Office for Students, the regulator for higher education in England.

The Home Office works with the Department of Education and the Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government to encourage collaboration between police, local authorities and higher education settings to ensure protests can be managed effectively.

Sector news

Skills England: Pathways to Priority Occupations

Skills England has published its [Pathways to Priority Occupations](#) measure, mapping education and training routes to priority occupations in the Industrial Strategy, construction, and health and social care. The Government says this is a first step in identifying subjects that may be eligible for targeted maintenance grants from academic year 2028–29. Priority HE subject areas include medicine and dentistry, nursing and midwifery, pharmacology, architecture, computing, allied health, engineering, medical sciences, physics and astronomy, economics, chemistry and mathematical sciences.

Refugee study route

The Home Office has announced that trusted universities will be able to directly sponsor refugees through a study route from autumn 2027 - with applications opening this autumn. The news comes via a [press release](#) on the launch of the Immigration and Asylum Bill.

Department for Science and Innovation launches women in research charter

The Department for Science, Innovation and Technology launched a new [Women in Research Charter](#) with more than 50 universities and other research organisations as part of the initial signatories. The charter includes a commitment to ensuring that funding schemes are “genuinely deliverable on a part-time basis,” a pledge to match UKRI support in areas such as adoption and maternity leave and taking steps on fair assessment to avoid disadvantaging those who have taken career breaks.

Independent inquiry into white working class educational outcomes

The Independent Inquiry into *White Working-Class Educational Outcomes* [published its final report](#) earlier this week. The inquiry, supported by Public First, explored data and public opinion on education progression for those from white working-class backgrounds. In terms of higher education, many participants in the study questioned whether university study was relevant to them. The report recommends “massively expanding apprenticeship opportunities” as well as reimagining higher education in a more flexible way.

UK revenue from education related exports and transnational education activity

The Department for Education has published its estimates of UK revenue from education-related exports and transnational education. UK revenue from education exports and TNE stood at £36.7bn in 2024. Almost £24bn of that was from the course fees and living expenses of international students in higher education. The revenue ascribed to TNE rose from £670m in 2022 to £840m. For the first time in these Official Statistics in Development the Department for Education data release contains estimates of export revenue by UK regions and nations arising from international students in higher education, as well as revenue by country of origin You can read the full data [release here](#).

Government Actuary Department: Valuation of Teachers' Pension Scheme

The Government Actuary's Department has published the 2024 valuation of the Teachers' Pension Scheme, setting a new employer contribution rate of 17.6 per cent from April 2027, down 11 per cent from the currently applicable rate. The change is largely due to a reduction in the SCAPE discount rate, which is used to set employer contribution rates within valuations of unfunded public service pensions. You can find the [full valuation here](#).

National Centre for Universities and Business welcome Andy Burnham's ambitions for good growth

The National Centre for Universities and Business (NCUB) welcomes the ambitions set out Andy Burnham's speech on Monday 29 July. Clearer industrial priorities and targeted 'good growth' funding were welcomed. However, they called for a new government to better understand how interconnected science, innovation and entrepreneurship are with interventions focussed on higher education. Read their full [response here](#).

Letter from Minister for Skills for Higher Education

On 24 June, Minister for Skills, Baroness Smith, wrote to Helen Hayes MP, Chair of the Education Select Committee regarding quality and student outcomes in higher education. You can read the full [letter here](#).

House of Lords briefing note on the affordability and quality of higher education.

This briefing examines issues relating to the affordability and quality of higher education in England, in the context of the government's post-16 education and skills white paper published in autumn 2025. Read the [briefing here](#).