



Universities UK

# SUPPORTING UNIVERSITIES TO DELIVER SKILLS, GROWTH AND IMPROVE LIVES

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Our world-leading universities play a central role through their teaching and research activities in generating national economic growth and employment, improving life opportunities, supporting social cohesion and promoting invention and innovation – while attracting international talent from across the world. They generate more than £95 billion in output for the economy, £13.1 billion in export earnings and over 940,000 full-time equivalent jobs across the UK.

Universities UK is calling on all Conservative leadership candidates to support universities by making commitments to grow their economic, social and cultural benefits alongside their global competitiveness and reach. Any new prime minister must also consider the context of the higher education sector in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and their devolved administrations.

UK universities generate:

**£13.1 billion** in export earnings

**£95 billion** in output to the economy

**940,000** full-time equivalent jobs

# A LONG-TERM AND SUSTAINABLE FUNDING PLAN FOR UNIVERSITIES AND STUDENTS

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Universities need sustainable funding, to secure the best possible experience for students especially in the context of the expected rise in 18-year-olds in the coming years, alongside continuing their world class research. A long-term plan for funding for universities can ensure that students receive the highest quality teaching and support, everyone reaches their potential regardless of their background and deliver the diverse skills base the economy needs.

## WE WANT TO SEE CANDIDATES COMMIT TO:

- no cap on the number of students who want to study at university
- maintaining current funding per university student in real terms
- introducing maintenance grants for students who most need them
- cutting the interest rate on loans while students are at university
- maintaining a system which supports student mobility across all the UK by continuing to enable students to study wherever they choose to
- funding a national education programme on student finance to ensure students are fully informed of the funding options available to them before applying to university
- working with the universities, employers and further education providers to create more opportunities for flexible and lifelong learning
- supporting universities to deliver more degree apprenticeships

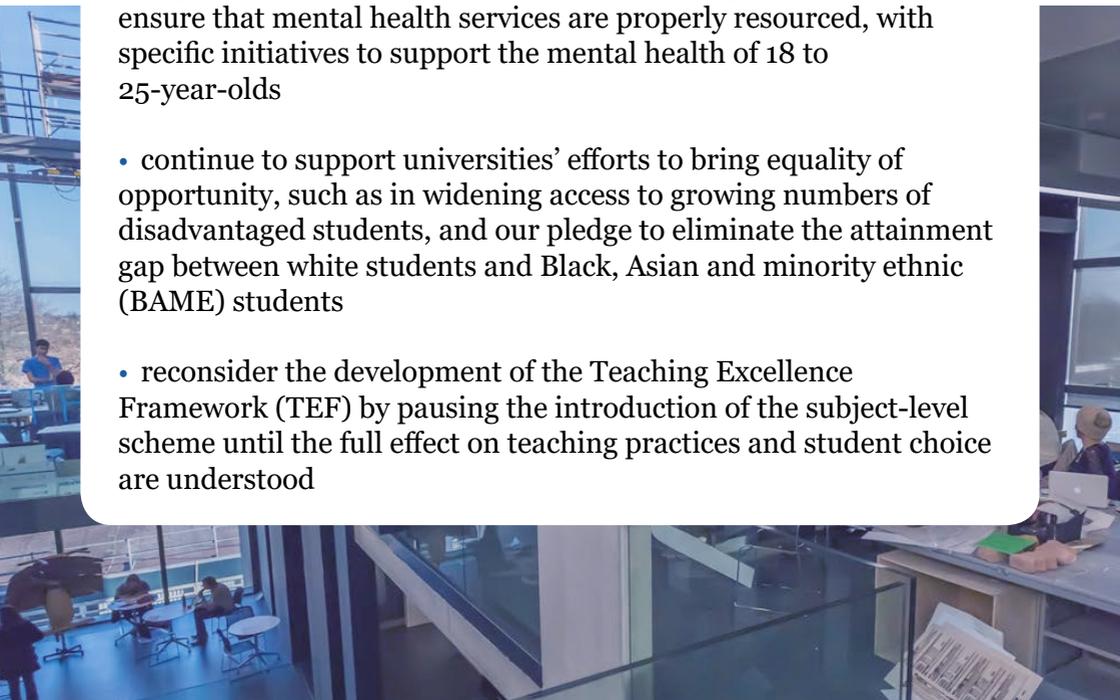
# ENHANCING THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

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Universities place huge importance on the student experience and in recent years have placed a greater focus on ensuring all students receive value for money and are properly supported throughout their studies. The next prime minister should support universities in improving outcomes for student mental health and wellbeing, and ensure there is effective regulation in place to enhance teaching practices within institutions.

## THE NEXT PRIME MINISTER SHOULD:

- continue to support work to improve student mental health and wellbeing outcomes, such as the Stepchange framework and the University Mental Health Charter
- allocate funding for specific initiatives to support universities in developing new and innovative ways to improve student mental health and wellbeing outcomes
- implement the commitments in the NHS Long Term Plan and ensure that mental health services are properly resourced, with specific initiatives to support the mental health of 18 to 25-year-olds
- continue to support universities' efforts to bring equality of opportunity, such as in widening access to growing numbers of disadvantaged students, and our pledge to eliminate the attainment gap between white students and Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) students
- reconsider the development of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) by pausing the introduction of the subject-level scheme until the full effect on teaching practices and student choice are understood



# MAINTAINING OUR WORLD LEADING STATUS IN SCIENCE AND RESEARCH

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The next prime minister should seek to support the UK's world-leading and internationally excellent research base by committing to the current research and development investment targets and allowing leading researchers from around the world to work here. This will help to build on the UK's strengths as a world leader in research, boosting economic growth and productivity in all regions and nations of the UK.

## WE WANT TO SEE CANDIDATES COMMIT TO:

- the government target of 2.4% of GDP invested in UK research and development by 2027 and the longer-term goal of 3%
- ensuring the research talent necessary to reach these goals by having an immigration system which welcomes research staff and by increasing domestic funding to support the development and retention of postgraduate research talent
- continuing support for Official Development Assistance (ODA) sourced research funding including the Global Challenges Research Fund and Newton Fund



# AN IMMIGRATION SYSTEM FOR GLOBAL BRITAIN

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International students and staff benefit the UK economically, culturally and socially, and the next prime minister must guarantee an immigration system that allows universities to recruit and retain both international students and staff at all skill levels.

## WE WANT TO SEE CANDIDATES COMMIT TO:

- introducing a 2-year global graduate talent visa for international graduates to keep the UK an attractive and competitive destination for international students
- lowering the proposed salary requirement for international workers to gain a high-skilled work visa to £21,000
- committing to the International Education Strategy target of increasing international student numbers to at least 600,000 by 2030
- introducing policies to support growth in international student numbers and avoiding a cap on numbers as a means of controlling net migration
- ensuring a compliance regime that is fair, fully transparent and applies equally to all higher education sponsors of staff and students

# DELIVERING A SUCCESSFUL BREXIT FOR UNIVERSITIES

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The next prime minister must secure an effective post-Brexit settlement for universities through an orderly withdrawal avoiding a 'no deal' and agreeing a longer-term partnership based on strong academic cooperation, collaboration and exchange between the UK and its EU partners.

## WE WANT TO SEE CANDIDATES COMMIT TO:

- an immigration system that facilitates and promotes academic collaboration and exchange among students, researchers and scientists
- securing associated country status to the next EU Framework Programme, Horizon Europe, and developing new collaborative research funding arrangements between the UK and international partners
- securing ongoing UK participation in the Erasmus+ programme beyond Brexit

