



All-Party Parliamentary University Group

Weekly update

22 – 25 April 2025

A regular digest of House of Commons, House of Lords, and higher education sector business.

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Parliamentary business

Renters' Rights Bill – House of Lords Committee Day 1

On Tuesday 22 April, the Renters Rights' Bill was debated at committee stage in the Lords. Amendments debated include:

Amendment 7, tabled by Baroness Scott (Conservative) which would allow fixed term assured tenancies if the tenant was a student at the beginning of the tenancy. The government rejected this on the basis that it would not be fair for students to have less flexibility than other tenants just because of their educational status.

Amendment 40, introduced by Lord Willetts (Conservative) sought to expand ground 4A to one- and two-bedroom properties. This was rejected by the government on the basis that students who need more security of tenure, (such as single parents living with their children) should be protected.

Amendments 41 and 45, tabled by Baroness Scott (Conservative), sought to remove the requirement for a landlord intending to rely on ground 4A to give prior written notice to the tenants. This would mean that landlords renting to students in HMOs who satisfy the student test would be able to rely on ground 4A without giving tenants written prior notice, before the tenancy was entered into, of their wish to be able to recover possession using ground 4A. These were rejected by the government because the prior notice requirement in ground 4A is key to enhancing the security of tenants. If tenants are liable to be evicted through no fault of their own simply because of their student status, they must be informed of this reduced security before entering into a tenancy.

Amendment 42 tabled by Lord Evans (Crossbench), sought to allow the use of ground 4A in student tenancies agreed up to nine months in advance, rather than the six months in advance that is currently in the Bill. The government stated that this measure was intended to discourage landlords who seek to sign students up to contracts early in the academic year. This amendment was rejected because increasing the time limit to nine months will push early sign-ups to too early in the academic year, which the government stated 'undermines the point of the deterrent'. Amendment 43 was also rejected. This was also tabled by Lord Evans and would extend the time limit to 12 months.

Amendment 44 sought to remove the restriction on the use of ground 4A to the summer of the traditional academic year. This would mean that students on a traditional term date, could be evicted in the middle of the academic year. This was

rejected by the government because it would be wrong to expose all students to eviction in the middle of their academic year simply because, for example, a landlord found a group with different term dates who were willing to pay more.

Amendment 189 sought to remove the private rented student tenancies from the assured tenancy system. This was rejected as students renting off-street housing should have the same rights as other renters.

Amendment 266 sought to exempt private purpose-built student accommodation from discretionary licensing where the landlord has signed up to a code of practice for managing such accommodation. The government rejected this on the basis that it trusts local authorities to take a proportionate approach and work together with code operators and providers of these types of accommodation to make sure that licensing schemes remain focused on tackling the issues they were designed to address.

Government Amendments 47, 188 and 202 would allow private PBSA to be subject to the same exemptions from the assured tenancy system as university-managed accommodation. The exemption will apply only to private PBSA that is a member of the government-approved code of practice. The government also proposed an amendment to an existing power in the Housing Act 2004 that clarifies that educational establishments exempt from HMO licensing can be specified by reference to code membership and that the power can be exercised in the same way for private purpose-built student accommodation in future. The amendment also allows the scope of an exemption to be narrowed to certain groups of building, or building manager, within the membership if required.

A transcript of the debate is [available here](#).

Committee stage of the Bill will continue on 28 April, 6 May, 12 May, and 14 May.

Education Committee – Further Education and Skills oral evidence

On Wednesday 23 April the Education Committee held an oral evidence session on further education and skills.

Alternatives to higher education

Caroline Voaden MP (Lib Dem) asked if the focus of the education system in the country had become too much about university and had lost sight of other options. **Phil Smith CBE (Chair of Skills England)** said it was important to show young people what the real job opportunities and pathways were, rather than suggesting university was the only route to employment. Many valuable jobs could be accessed with or without degrees

and across various environments, including private provision and apprenticeships. The aim was to provide data and focus areas to address the issue. He questioned whether the problem lay in young people or parents not understanding apprenticeships compared to university. It was necessary to identify this nationally and regionally and then determine how to help people access the right pathways to secure the right jobs.

Level 7 apprenticeships

Jess Asato MP (Labour) asked what impact the decision to remove Level 7 apprenticeships from the Levy funding would have on the system and on social mobility within the workplace. **Dr Katerina Kolyva (Chief Executive of Education and Training Foundation)** said it was not an either-or situation, but about prioritisation. There was a need to focus on young people and making individuals economically active, but Level 7 apprenticeships were also necessary for a leadership pipeline and progression. It was about achieving balance, focusing without removing everything.

Ben Rowland (Chief Executive of Association of Employment and Learning Providers) said about £300 million was spent on level 7 apprenticeships, much of which went to people who should be funded, such as NHS workers and young people entering solicitor or accountancy roles who otherwise would not have been able to. The proposal to save money needed to be planned over a long period, as these apprenticeships were lengthy. Employers needed several years to adjust to putting in more of their own money. The current proposal of a cliff edge was not business savvy, especially with employers already upset about changes in National Insurance contributions and upcoming employment legislation. The Government needed to implement a gradual taper to give employers time to adjust.

You can watch the session [here](#).

Forthcoming business

Oral questions – Education

On Monday 28 April, at 2.30pm the Secretary of State for Education, Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson MP will answer oral questions in the House of Commons. Relevant questions include:

- Chris Ward MP (Labour): What steps she is taking to protect freedom of speech at universities. (903819)
- Rachael Maskell MP (Labour): What recent assessment she has made of the adequacy of higher education funding. (903822)

You can find a [list of questions here](#) and [watch the session here](#).

Renters’ Rights Bill - Committee (day 3 of 6)

The third sitting of the Renters’ Rights Bill committee in the House of Lords will commence on Monday 28 April. Other committee dates are 6, 12 & 14 May.

You can [watch the session here](#).

Oral evidence – Business and Trade Committee

On Tuesday 29 April, the Business and Trade Committee will hear evidence on the industrial strategy from:

- Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester at Greater Manchester Combined Authority
- Kim McGuinness, North East Mayor at North East Combined Authority
- Howard Dawber, Deputy Mayor, Business and Growth at Greater London Authority
- Kitty Ussher, Head of Group Policy Development at Barclays
- John Godfrey, Managing Director for Public Affairs, Policy and Research at TheCityUK
- Louis Taylor, CEO at British Business Bank,
- John Flint, Chief Executive Officer at National Wealth Fund
- Stian Westlake, Executive Chair at UKRI / Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)
- Mike Biddle, Executive Director for Net Zero at Innovate UK (UKRI)
- Matt Clifford MBE, Chair at Advanced Research and Invention Agency (ARIA)
- Professor Ben Morgan, Chief Executive at Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre



You can [watch the session here](#).

Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (Transfer of Functions etc.) Bill - consideration of amendments

On Wednesday 30 April, the House of Lords will consider amendments made to the IfATE bill by the House of Commons.

You can see the order paper [here](#).

Recess

The House of Commons will be in recess from Friday 2 May and will return on Tuesday 6 May.

Written questions and statements

Department for Education: Student Loans

Julian Lewis (Conservative) (New Forest East): (UIN 42388) To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she plans to take to ensure that the cost of loans advanced to (a) overseas and (b) domestic applicants subsequently found not to have seriously participated in higher education courses will not be borne by UK taxpayers; and what safeguards she plans to introduce to prevent student loan fraud in future.

Janet Daby (Labour) (Lewisham East): As a general rule, students are eligible for fee and maintenance loans only if they have settled status in the United Kingdom and have been ordinarily resident in the United Kingdom or the Republic of Ireland for three years. Students resident overseas are not eligible for loans.

The department and the Office for Students (OfS) have a programme of investigations underway. Where these investigations have found abuse of the student finance system, there will be serious consequences. We have now also asked the Public Sector Fraud Authority to tackle this threat and take forward this work across government. The department will always take steps to recover student loans that have been paid to students who have not been attending their courses. Depending on the precise circumstances, recovery has been and will continue to be pursued either from the institution or the student.

The department is consulting until 4 April on subcontracted provision. The consultation proposes changes to the requirements for courses to attract student finance that will necessitate subcontracted providers with specific numbers of students to be registered and regulated by the OfS. Together with the work of the OfS, which is currently consulting on reforms to its registration requirements, the department's consultation will ensure subcontracted provision is better protected from poor quality and the risk of the misuse of public funding.

The department will also take immediate action on the use of agents to recruit students. The government can see no legitimate role for domestic agents in the recruitment of UK students. We are taking urgent steps to prevent any further abuse of the system.

[Source](#)

Sector news

Access to Success – Universities UK

On Wednesday 23 April, Universities UK launched *Access to Success: Our action plan to break down barriers to opportunity* at a breakfast roundtable in the House of Commons. The roundtable was sponsored by Darren Paffey MP, chaired by Professor Jane Harrington and attended by MPs and sector representatives including UCAS and the Sutton Trust.

Access to Success sets out four key actions that the sector and government can take to increase opportunity through higher education:

1. Unlock potential through contextual admissions
2. Collaborate in cold spots to raise aspirations
3. Set all students up for success with an adequate maintenance package
4. Create career ready graduates with targeted careers support

As a part of the first action on contextual admissions, at the event, Universities UK, UCAS and the Sutton Trust announced that they would be undertaking a joint project to improve the consistency and transparency of contextual admissions in England. UUK will convene the sector going forwards and have opened a call for evidence to its members to better understand how individual universities across England reflect on the context of students to make the process fairer for those who experienced extra hardship on their path to university.

You can read [more](#).

Disabled Student Commitment Advisory Group launches new Competence Standards Guidance – AdvanceHE

On Thursday 24 April, the Disabled Student Commitment Advisory Group hosted an event at the House of Commons to mark the official launch of the Competence Standards Guidance (CSG). This guidance helps higher education providers distinguish between competence standards and assessment methods so that reasonable adjustments can be made for disabled students.



The All-Party Parliamentary
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You can read [more](#).