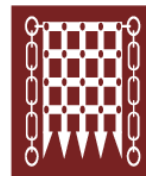


**Westminster Higher Education Forum policy conference:
Next steps for higher education access and participation in England**

Timing: Morning, Monday, 7th December 2026

*****Taking Place Online*****

Draft agenda subject to change



**WESTMINSTER
HIGHER EDUCATION
FORUM**

- 8.30 Registration
- 9.00 **Chair's opening remarks**
Senior Parliamentarian
- 9.05 **Higher education access and participation - key developments and considerations for implementation**
Senior commentator
Questions and comments from the floor
- 9.30 **Participation, funding and flexible pathways in higher education**
implications of the Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper / implementing the LLE while supporting access, progression and student success / flexible and modular provision / learner choice, credit transfer, recognition of prior learning and coordination across providers / tuition fees, maintenance support, living costs and affordability / the International Student Levy and targeted support for learners from low-income households / Youth Guarantee, Jobs Guarantee and apprenticeship incentives / supporting equality of opportunity alongside provider capacity and financial sustainability / regional skills priorities, employer partnerships and locally-led delivery / learner demand for degree apprenticeships, employer engagement and regional availability
Dr Maggie Leggett, Director, External Relations, Queen Mary University of London
Senior representative, further education
Senior representative, students
Senior representative, local authority
Senior representative, employer
Questions and comments from the floor
- 10.25 **Chair's closing remarks**
Senior Parliamentarian
- 10.30 Break
- 10.40 **Chair's opening remarks**
Senior Parliamentarian
- 10.45 **Access and Participation Plans - priorities for implementation and demonstrating impact**
Senior representative, regulation
- 11.00 **Regulation, quality and accountability**
future direction of Access and Participation Plans / balancing regulation, risk-based approaches, institutional autonomy and equality of opportunity / identifying disparities in access, continuation and progression / demonstrating impact and informing intervention with proportionate evidence analysis / approaches to provision where student outcomes are weak / integrated TEF, recruitment limits and links between ratings and funding / the OfS as primary regulator for provision at level 4 and above / institutional missions, regional access to provision and student choice / accountability and continuous improvement while recognising provider diversity / implications for specialist, small and mission-led providers / provider responsibilities for student protection, transparency and oversight
Dr David Gilani, Head, Access and Participation, Middlesex University
Annette Hayton, Senior Research Fellow, Department of Education; and NERUPI Convenor, University of Bath
Senior representative, students
Senior representative, specialist institution
- 11.20 Questions and comments from the floor
- 11.45 **Sector priorities for routes into higher education and progression pathways**
Naomi Abayasekara, Policy Adviser, Universities UK
- 11.55 **Admissions, progression and student success**
future role of contextual admissions in promoting equality of opportunity / fairness and transparency in admissions / targeting regional gaps in access through outreach and collaborative approaches / improving progression from T Levels and other technical pathways / first V Levels from 2027 and transition from AGQs / implications of placing academic and technical routes on an equal footing for progression and learner choice / impartial guidance and clearer routes between FE, HE and employment / addressing barriers to continuation, attainment and progression into employment or further study / supporting belonging, wellbeing and affordability across the student lifecycle / access and outcomes for underrepresented groups including part-time, mature and postgraduate learners / recognition of prior learning, credit transfer and progression through modular provision / provider capacity, learner support and effective transition arrangements across different routes and providers
Senior representative, higher education
Senior representative, further education
Senior representative, students
Senior representative, employer
- 12.15 Questions and comments from the floor
- 12.40 **Next steps for higher education access and participation policy**
Professor Kathryn Mitchell, CBE DL, Vice-Chancellor, University of Derby; and Chair, Higher Education Access and Participation Task and Finish Group
Questions and comments from the floor
- 13.05 **Chair's and Westminster Higher Education Forum closing remarks**
Senior Parliamentarian
Sean Cudmore, Westminster Higher Education Forum