

Westminster Higher Education Forum policy conference:

Next steps for higher education admissions in England

Timing: Morning, Monday, 9th March 2026

Taking Place Online

Draft agenda subject to change

- 8.30 Registration
- 9.00 **Chair's opening remarks**
Senior Parliamentarian
- 9.05 **Developing HE admissions processes - impact of the revised personal statement**
Lynsey Hopkins, Director, Admissions, UCAS
Questions and comments from the floor
- 9.30 **Fair admissions code of practice - sector standards, guidance, and compliance**
Naomi Abayasekara, Policy Adviser, Universities UK
- 9.40 **Assessing the current admissions system - options for relieving funding pressures, international student routes, and personal statement reform**
revised personal statement implementation | implications for fairness and transparency | supporting schools and colleges in adjusting to new admissions systems | assessing recruitment strategies | addressing variation in applicant preparation | impact on decision-making across institutional settings | practical challenges for universities in adapting to admissions reform under resource constraints | next steps for student support services | England's competitiveness as a study destination | impact of visa restrictions and levies | uncertainty in international application numbers and tuition income | tensions between regulatory compliance and financial resilience | impact of the 2025 Spending Review and Strategic Priorities Grant cuts | challenges for outreach, staffing, and subject provision
Senior representative, university
Senior representative, international students
Senior representative, college
Senior commentator
- 10.00 Questions and comments from the floor
- 10.25 **Addressing fairness and compliance in the admissions system**
Senior representative, regulation
Questions and comments from the floor
- 10.45 **Chair's closing remarks**
Senior Parliamentarian
- 10.50 Break
- 11.00 **Chair's opening remarks**
Senior Parliamentarian
- 11.05 **Options for innovation and digital tools in admissions processes**
the role of AI, digital platforms, and tools in modernisation | developing informed and unbiased admissions decisions | reducing administrative burden | data governance, accountability, and institutional readiness | developing infrastructure and staff capability | opportunities for technology to strengthen applicant support
Senior representative, university
Senior representative, technology
Senior representative, union
Senior commentator
Questions and comments from the floor
- 11.50 **Assessing the role of admissions in improving student social mobility**
Professor Anna Mountford-Zimdars, Professor, Social Justice, and Founder and Co-Director, Centre for Social Mobility, University of Exeter
- 12.00 **Widening participation in higher education - improving access, contextual admissions, and retention**
implications of UUK's Access to Success Action Plan | contextual admissions moving forward | recognition of local and individual context | balancing national approaches and institutional autonomy | recognition of vocational and technical qualifications | assessing evidence on approaches to improving access and the interaction between offer-making and progression outcomes | measuring and evaluating impact of maintenance grants reintroduction | enabling access and student choice | examining drivers of demographic and regional disparities | partnerships between FE and universities | evaluating success of outreach programmes
Senior representative, university
Senior representative, students' union
Senior representative, charity
Senior representative, college
Senior commentator
- 12.25 Questions and comments from the floor
- 12.55 **Chair's and Westminster Higher Education Forum closing remarks**
Senior Parliamentarian
Sean Cudmore, Westminster Higher Education Forum

