

## Westminster Higher Education Forum policy conference:

### Next steps for higher education admissions in England

Timing: Morning, Monday, 9<sup>th</sup> 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