

**Westminster Higher Education Forum policy conference:
Next steps for the financial sustainability and long-term funding of higher education in England**

Timing: Morning, Monday, 18th May 2026

Taking Place Online

Draft agenda subject to change

- 8.30 Registration
- 9.00 **Chair's opening remarks**
Senior Parliamentarian
- 9.05 **Assessing the current financial sustainability of the higher education sector**
Horia Teodorescu, Policy Adviser, Universities UK
Questions and comments from the floor
- 9.30 **Immediate priorities for improving HE finances**
assessing existing funding frameworks | balancing public and private contributions | managing demand and disparities across institutions | tuition fee and maintenance loan reform | inflation-linking, and repayment threshold considerations | supporting equity, access, and participation | targeted grants, indexation, and funding adjustments | international student income and strategy | impact of immigration reforms on compliance, diversification, and brand positioning | sustaining high-cost and strategic provision | identifying institutions at risk and planning for insolvency contingencies | managing operational pressures, administrative capacity, and teaching resources | institutional operating model reform and programme portfolio management | strategic trade-offs in resource allocation and long-term institutional planning
Senior representative, university
Senior representative, students' union
Senior representative, consultancy
Senior commentator
Questions and comments from the floor
- 10.15 **Strategies for developing alternative funding models for longer-term financial sustainability**
Senior representative, sector body
Questions and comments from the floor
- 10.40 **Chair's closing remarks**
Senior Parliamentarian
- 10.45 Break
- 10.55 **Chair's opening remarks**
Senior Parliamentarian
- 11.00 **Approaches to building resilience - income diversification and strategic adaptation**
options for commercial, transnational, and international revenue growth | enhancing governance and capability for effective expansion | alignment of initiatives with national priorities and Industrial Strategy goals | optimising alternative business models and partnerships | advancing research commercialisation, spin-outs, short courses, modular provision, and industry collaborations | learning from global approaches | overcoming barriers to scalable diversification amid regulatory and cost pressures | operational readiness for Lifelong Learning Entitlement delivery and flexible provision | maintaining teaching quality and student experience alongside diversification strategies
Senior representative, university
Senior representative, investment
Senior representative, spin-out
Senior representative, industry
Questions and comments from the floor
- 11.40 **Options for long-term collaboration and mergers between higher education institutions**
Senior representative, university
- 11.50 **Priorities for financial regulation, governance, and long-term sustainability of higher education**
expected impact of the international student levy | recruitment and market diversification strategies | supporting institutional resilience | balancing expansion with quality, retention, and long-term viability | regulatory oversight and evolving governance frameworks | supporting global competitiveness and access to international student markets | options for mergers and long-term collaboration strategies | role of the Office for Students in shaping institutional strategy | financial planning, stress testing, and risk management | alignment of institutional strategy with national priorities, Industrial Strategy goals, and lifelong learning objectives | sustaining strategically important teaching and research provision | scenario planning, financial forecasting, and liquidity assessment in institutional planning | interaction of regulatory frameworks with participation objectives and the rollout of the Lifelong Learning Entitlement
Senior representative, university
Senior representative, students
Senior commentator
- 12.05 Questions and comments from the floor
- 12.30 **Regulatory and policy considerations for supporting the long-term financial resilience of higher education**
Will Dent, Head, Financial Sustainability, Office for Students
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

