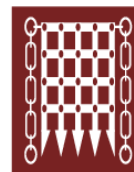


Westminster Higher Education Forum policy conference:

Next steps for UK research and innovation policy

Timing: Morning, Monday, 12th October 2026

Taking Place Online



WESTMINSTER
HIGHER EDUCATION
FORUM

Draft agenda subject to change

- 8.30 Registration
- 9.00 **Chair's opening remarks**
Senior Parliamentarian
- 9.05 **The UK research and innovation system - latest developments and key considerations for the future**
Senior commentator
Questions and comments from the floor
- 9.30 **Strategic priorities for research funding and system reform**
implications of Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper proposals / national priorities, UKRI allocations and programme delivery / research funding reform and the longer-term structure of public investment / QR, HEIF and competitive awards / funding adequacy, full economic cost recovery and institutional resilience / future development of research assessment / curiosity-driven, mission-led and strategically directed research / institutional autonomy, research independence and disciplinary breadth / collaboration, specialisation and areas of institutional strength / capability, infrastructure and skills / R&D Missions Accelerator implementation / implications of the UKRI AI Research and Innovation Strategic Framework
Professor Mark Brandon, Pro Vice Chancellor, Research and Innovation, The Open University
Senior representative, research
Senior representative, business
Senior representative, investment
Questions and comments from the floor
- 10.15 **Supporting high-growth research, innovation and commercialisation**
Senior representative, research council
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 **The role of universities in innovation, growth and regional development**
Greg Wade, Head, Innovation, Universities UK
- 11.15 **Supporting regional development through research, innovation and knowledge exchange**
HEIF reform and the LIPF / university, business and government collaboration / knowledge exchange and routes to practical application / research commercialisation / support for spin-outs, start-ups and scale-ups / the role of Innovate UK and implementation of the Growth Catalyst programme / links between public support, private investment and specialist advice / research strengths and capacity across institutions / place-based investment alongside research excellence and national strategic priorities / regional innovation clusters, infrastructure and skills / adoption and wider use of emerging technologies / government response to the Science, Innovation and Technology Committee's Flying Blind: Innovation, Growth and the Regions report / tracking cluster development, collaboration and local economic impact
Professor Sarah Hainsworth, Pro Vice Chancellor, Research, Durham University
Melissa Crellin, Interim Head, Policy, Partnerships, and Public Affairs, Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority
Senior representative, research
Senior representative, spin-out
- 11.35 Questions and comments from the floor
- 12.00 **International collaboration and strengthening the UK research workforce**
experience of UK association to Horizon Europe / preparation for Framework Programme 10 / wider bilateral and multilateral research partnerships / implications of evolving European and international arrangements / Global Talent Taskforce and Global Talent Fund priorities / international mobility, visa arrangements and competitiveness of the UK offer / links between international recruitment and the domestic talent pipeline / doctoral training, fellowships and early-career development / UKRI AI Research and Innovation Strategic Framework workforce commitments / employment conditions, progression and retention / flexible and sustainable career routes / reducing unnecessary administrative demands / Women in Research Charter implementation / diversity, inclusion and representation in senior research leadership
Dr Joe Marshall, Chief Executive, National Centre for Universities and Business
Anne Delille, Head, International R&D Proposals, Digital Catapult
Professor Nigel Williams, Pro Vice Chancellor, Research and Innovation, University of Portsmouth
Questions and comments from the floor
- 12.35 **Policy priorities for the UK research and innovation system**
Senior representative, policy
Questions and comments from the floor
- 13.00 **Chair's and Westminster Higher Education Forum closing remarks**
Senior Parliamentarian
Sean Cudmore, Westminster Higher Education Forum