

Will you want to vote on university funding and fees in the coming Parliament? Do you have a university in your constituency?

The following note is a brief snapshot of the issues which are likely to be voted on or debated during the next Parliament and the ways University Alliance can provide useful information.

Universities are now major generators of economic growth for the UK and the largest employers in some cities. The main issues in the coming Parliament which will call for decisions and will raise public debate are:

1. Fees and Funding

- Following the current Review of Higher Education Funding (Lord Browne's Independent Review), decisions will need to be made regarding how to fund universities, especially whether there should be an increase in the contribution graduates make.
- Given the Liberal Democrats' objection to any increase in tuition fees, the University Alliance proposals for a Graduate Contribution Scheme might prove to be a useful basis on which to make progress on conversations about university funding.¹

2. Number of student places

- Last year about 160,000 students who applied to university couldn't get a place and the number is set to increase this year.
- A large proportion of the growth is coming from well qualified A-level students many of whom wish to study Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) related courses, which are key for economic growth.
- University Alliance can provide further information regarding increases in applications for STEM and STEM-related courses to our universities.²

3. Extent of cuts

- It has been confirmed that at least £1.49 billion of cuts will be made to universities in 2010/11 (£449m of those already allocated, £600m to be allocated), and it is likely that further cuts will be made.
- Universities contribute 2.3% of GDP (from 1.1% GDP investment) making them generators of economic growth and wealth creation. Cuts should be minimised, in order that universities can continue to drive economic recovery and the knowledge economy.
- University Alliance can provide further information regarding the role of our universities in helping businesses and graduates coming out of a recession, and also what Alliance universities are doing to drive economic recovery.³

FAQs

1. Who is University Alliance and what is its function?

University Alliance represents a group of 23 large, business focussed, research engaged universities at the heart of the sector. We are not a lobby group, but an organisation which undertakes research to inform key decision makers.

¹ See: http://www.university-alliance.ac.uk/downloads/Publication_Proposal_for_a_Graduate_Contribution_Scheme_in_England.pdf

² See: <http://www.university-alliance.ac.uk/research-publications.htm>

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2. How can University Alliance help me?

We are recognised in government as a 'reliable voice', producing constructive briefings, advice and information.

We provide good quality, clear information, advice and guidance - from briefing papers to visits to our member universities and informal chats about upcoming debates or decisions.

Our central office staff are available to answer any questions you have about Alliance universities and university funding and policy.

3. How do you fit in with Universities UK?

Universities UK are an umbrella organisation representing all UK universities (over 115). They are an excellent organisation – please do get in touch with them if you would like any further information about their work.

University Alliance works by supporting UUK whilst providing more specific information for a group of universities at the heart of the sector with a similar focus.

4. Who are your members, and why?

Our members are major, successful universities with a strong emphasis on economic relevance and business partnership. All undertake areas of world-leading research, often in areas critical to the economy.

They are major providers of postgraduate and professional education and are often the largest provider of this in their region, with up to 70% of courses professionally accredited. Alliance universities educate 27% of all UK students and achieve some of the highest graduate employment rates. These are confident, business-like universities with long histories of shaping the economy and driving new industries through world-class engineering, innovative and design.

Sources of useful information:

- University Alliance website: www.university-alliance.ac.uk
This has links to
 - Parliamentary briefing papers
 - Publications and consultation responses
 - Details of other organisations producing research and information about higher education
- To speak to a member of staff or to arrange a visit to one of our institutions, please contact the University Alliance central office: 0203 178 7491 or aharris@university-alliance.ac.uk

If you have any questions regarding these universities, or would like more detailed briefing notes on any aspect of university funding and policy then please contact Alexandra Harris: aharris@university-alliance.ac.uk, 0203 178 7491

Alliance universities:

Aberystwyth University, Bournemouth University, University of Bradford, De Montfort University, University of Glamorgan, Glasgow Caledonian University, University of Gloucestershire, University of Hertfordshire, University of Huddersfield, University of Lincoln, Liverpool John Moores University, Manchester Metropolitan University, Northumbria University, Nottingham Trent University, Open University, Oxford Brookes University, University of Plymouth, University of Portsmouth, University of Salford, Sheffield Hallam University, University of Wales Institute, Cardiff, University of Wales, Newport, University of the West of England.