



APPG on Students work plan – 2017/2018

Briefing for: Chair, Vice-Chairs and Members of the APPG on Students

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1. Introduction

This briefing paper sets out the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Students' priority areas for the second half of 2017 to early 2018.

2. Overview of first half of 2017

Over the course of the last 6 months, the APPG made excellent progress in engaging with students and stakeholders from across the education sector through our informative events.

At the start of the year in February, the APPG hosted an event which discussed the impact of Brexit on students and the wider implications of the UK leaving the European Union. This event considered a number of issues affecting students from the future of study programmes, student and academic mobility, to removing international students from net migration figures. Speakers included; Beth Button, Executive Committee Member at the European Students' Union, Gemma Gray, Communication Manager at the Erasmus Student Network UK and Lina Dobрева, Vice-President for Education at University of Sunderland Students' Union.

Following this, in March we hosted an event on the decline in part-time and mature students and invited expert speakers from the sector to discuss this current crisis. The event outlined concerns facing the future for part-time study and the potential impact this could also have on student mobility within higher education more broadly. Speakers included; Hana Farber, Birkbeck Student Union, Nicola Simpson, (acting) President at the Open University Student Association and Jonathan Waller, Director of Information and Analysis at the Higher Education Statistics Agency.

There were plans to hold an event on further education in May with a particular focus on the Post-16 Skills Plan and what this means for students and apprentices. However, as the snap General Election was called in mid-April, all APPGs and activities were suspended until June 9th.

3. Outline of 2017/18

There were a number of Bills and non-legislative measures announced in the Queen's Speech, many of which will have a direct impact on students. As these Bills and subsequent reviews unfold, the APPG will await further details and look to pursue a number of these key policy areas over the course of the year.

The below outlines our proposed activity over the next 6-8 months. *Please n.b. this is subject to change depending on Parliamentary recess dates and publication of further information on subsequent Bills and reviews.*

'Just how powerful is the student voice? Listening to students after the General Election' – September

The APPG will meet to discuss the impact of the student voice in the recent General Election. The event will shed light on the issues and concerns facing students during the General Election from; funding education, implications from Brexit and what this means for young people.

Engaging with young people and acknowledging their role in mainstream politics has sparked much public debate. We have seen a number of senior political figures speak out on the rise of young voters. This event will therefore provide a platform for Members across all parties and stakeholders to recognise the role of young people in mainstream politics and how to engage with them going forward.

Potential dates:

W/c 4th or 11th September

Potential speakers:

- Shakira Martin, NUS President
- Nick Hillman, HEPI (surveyed students in the lead up to the election)
- Potential journalist who covered the General Election

Potential parliamentary attendee targets:

APPG for Further Education and Lifelong Learning
APPG on Universities

'The state of student housing' – October/Nov

Increasing costs of housing and accommodation can often be a barrier for many students in accessing education. Moreover, with private developments there has been a shift toward more 'high end' apartments offering student accommodation which organisations such as NUS and Unipol have argued create less affordable opportunities for students.

Furthermore, given the recent tragedy at Grenfell Tower, light has been shed on the safety of high-rise buildings and other accommodation, traditionally lived in by students across the country. This event will therefore aim to unearth some of the many concerns facing students with regard to housing, standards and accessing education more broadly.

This event will allow the Group to assess any new or adapted measures to be outlined in the Tenants' Fee Bill, as announced in the Queen's Speech.

Potential dates:

W/c 16th or 23rd October

Potential speakers:

- Students and student representatives
- Izzy Lenga, NUS Vice-President (Welfare)
- Martin Blakey, CEO at Unipol: the home of Student Housing

Potential parliamentary attendee targets:

APPG on Housing and Planning
APPG on Universities

'Addressing mental health in further and higher education' – December

Following on from the Mental Health consultation outlined in the Queen's Speech, the APPG will meet to discuss the rise in mental health difficulties amongst further and higher education students. A report from the National Union of Students published earlier this year, found that there is an increasing number of students experiencing anxiety, depression and having suicidal thoughts.

The growing awareness of the need to talk about mental health offers a vital opportunity to reassess mental health provision and services that are offered to communities, most notably to students in further and higher education institutions.

Potential dates:

November (TBC depending on recess dates)

Potential speakers:

- Students and student representatives
- Rachel O'Brien, NUS Disabled Students' Officer
- Rosie Tressler, CEO at Student Minds; the UK's student mental health charity
- David Hughes, CEO at Association of Colleges

Potential parliamentary attendee targets:

APPG on Mental Health

'What have we learnt one year on from triggering Article 50?' – Start of 2018

The APPG will revisit discussions surrounding Brexit and the wider implications these have for both home and international students. We are hoping by the beginning of 2018 there will be further clarity and progress made on Brexit negotiations, including more detail on the Great Repeal Bill and the UK's immigration policy.

As it stands, there is still much uncertainty facing students with regard to, student and academic mobility; employment and residential status for EU students; and protecting rights for international students' post-Brexit. This event will provide the opportunity to readdress and add further insight on a number of these concerns.

Moreover, with the publication of university admission statistics due at the start of 2018, it would be interesting to unearth any new developments that Brexit may have on the latest number of EU students applying to UK universities. We have already seen, recently confirmed by UCAS, that EU applications have fallen by 5% for the 2017/18 academic year. Preliminary figures for the 2018/19 academic year should be available early in 2018, and might make for interesting conversations.

Potential dates:

January/February

Potential speakers:

- A European student representative
- Rosie Bichard, Director of External Relations, Erasmus Student Network UK
- Yinbo Yu, International Students' Officer, NUS

Potential parliamentary attendee targets:

APPG on Universities
APPG on Freedom of Movement
APPG on UK and Europe
APPG on UK-EU Relations
APPG on International Students
APPG on Brexit

Additional topics for the Group to consider

- **'Student finance'**– this event will provide space to discuss the rise of student debt amongst learners across the country. Students are now leaving university with more debt than ever before and we will hear from experts and student representatives on the current financial support students receive, and how we can tackle this growing problem.
- **'The cost of living for students'** – this event will look at term-time employment undertaken by students and investigate whether this has impact on academic outcomes, as well as access to education more broadly.
- **'Student carers'** – this event will offer a platform for student carers to share their experiences and the impact on their wellbeing and education. Research from the NUS has commented that there is an increased need for more pastoral and financial support for student carers in both further and higher education institutions.
- **'Roll out of the Teaching Excellence Framework'** – with the implementation of the Higher Education Act, the Group will offer to host a joint event with the APPG on Universities, to examine how effective the Teaching Excellence Framework has been and discuss next steps, given a Chair for the Independent Review into the TEF must be appointed by April 2018.