

Universities UK  
Manifesto  
General Election 2005



# Introduction

Our universities are a great national asset and are among the best in the world. UK and international students report high levels of satisfaction in the education they receive. Our research performance is second only to that of the United States.

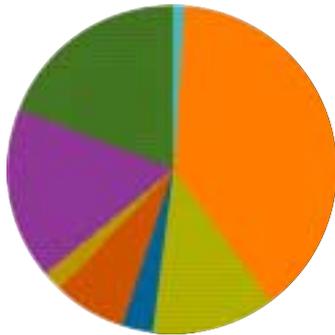
Our universities are internationally competitive in teaching and research, but they also make a major contribution to regional economies. In transferring the knowledge they create to their local communities, universities are one of the keys to driving regional economic growth. Dynamic universities, supported to fulfil their potential, will play a pivotal role in nurturing skills, stimulating innovation and creating fulfilling jobs.

As more and more people of all ages take up the life-changing opportunities offered by higher education, so universities become an increasingly important subject of national political debate.

The strength and quality of UK universities are founded on their independence and autonomy. But Government policy and funding decisions shape their future. Government investment in higher education is vital for the delivery of a stronger economy, a better health service, a cleaner environment and many other key public policy objectives.

This manifesto document sets out what Universities UK, working with Government, would like to achieve over the next Parliament. We look to all parties to address the issues it raises.

# About higher education in the UK



**Income**  
**£15.6bn**

Endowment and investment income  
1%

Funding council grants  
39%

Full-time UK and EC HE fees  
12%

Part-time HE course fees  
3%

Overseas (non EC) fees  
7%

Other fees and support grants  
2%

Research grants and contracts  
17%

Other income  
19%

There are currently 168 higher education institutions in the UK, of which 90 are universities.

In 2002/03 there were 2.2 million students enrolled in UK universities and colleges.

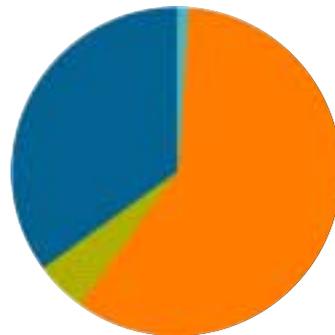
In 2002/03 in England the participation rate for 18–30 year olds in higher education was 44%.

In 2002/03 there were 184,700 international students studying in the UK, as well as 90,600 from the EU.

Universities employ over 300,000 staff; 1.8% of the total UK workforce.

UK higher education generates about £4 billion in foreign earnings annually. Education and training exports are worth a total of £10.2 billion.

Public funding of higher education per student fell by 37% between 1989 and 2002. During the same period student numbers grew by 94%.



**Expenditure**  
**£15.4bn**

Interest payable  
1%

Staff costs  
59%

Depreciation  
5%

Other operating expenses  
35%

**Income and expenditure of UK HEIs, 2002/03**

21500  
6000  
100-4

1500  
1500  
1000  
1000



## Adequate funding

We want the Government to:

- Increase public investment in universities.
- Support the introduction of variable graduate contributions with grants for poor students and ensure that fee income does not replace public funding.
- Fund universities to increase staff pay.
- Improve support for part-time students and adequately fund universities to teach them.
- Provide reliable income for universities so that they can plan ahead.
- Invest in teaching facilities
- Help universities to diversify their income streams.



# Adequate funding

If our universities are to remain globally competitive, the public and private funding of universities must increase. Universities UK believes that it is fair to ask graduates to contribute to the cost of their higher education. But Government must also increase the amount they provide in order to safeguard the quality of UK higher education for future generations.

**1**

We ask the next Government to make higher education a priority, as our competitors do. In developed countries, the average public expenditure on tertiary education institutions is 1% of gross domestic product (GDP). The UK spends only 0.8%. In the next Parliament, our priority is to ensure that public funding for higher education is increased, not eroded, to reverse the impact of years of decline in the unit of funding. Additional funding for teaching is a particularly urgent priority.

**2**

We look to the next Government to provide financial support for students while they are studying, alongside variable fees, payable after graduation. Increased fees are a vital source of new revenue to universities. It is imperative that this income is additional to, and does not replace, public funding.

**3**

We urge the Government to provide funds to help universities reward their staff adequately for the work they do. During a long period of under-funding, pay in the university sector has fallen behind that for comparable jobs.

**4**

We want the next Government to provide the funds to meet the full cost to institutions of teaching part-time students, and to provide those students with better financial support.

**5**

We look to the Government, as one of the major sources of funding, to provide income streams that are stable and reliable over the long term. This will help to ensure universities' future strength and success by enabling them to plan strategically.

**6**

We ask the Government for new investment in our teaching infrastructure – including lecture halls, libraries, IT networks and the fabric of our buildings – all of which have been relatively neglected as a result of the successive cuts of the 1980s and 1990s. Universities urgently need additional public funding to improve teaching facilities and support for students.

**7**

We call on the next Government to support the development of diverse sources of income. In turn, universities are already playing their part by working hard to diversify their income streams, building up their relationships with industry, and encouraging voluntary giving.

4+5

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# Supporting Students

We want the Government to:

- Provide grants for the poorest students.
- Make sure potential students know about the financial support they can get.
- Address the needs of part-time students.
- Protect university autonomy.
- Provide extra money to support the cost of teaching students from disadvantaged backgrounds.



Student Guide

In 2000 in England sport generated £9.5 billion in revenue for the country and provided nearly two million jobs. The average person in the UK has a higher income than the average person in the rest of the world. In 2000 in England sport generated £9.5 billion in revenue for the country and provided nearly two million jobs. The average person in the UK has a higher income than the average person in the rest of the world. In 2000 in England sport generated £9.5 billion in revenue for the country and provided nearly two million jobs. The average person in the UK has a higher income than the average person in the rest of the world.

# Supporting students

Higher education transforms people's lives. It opens doors that would otherwise remain closed. It increases earning power, leads to greater job satisfaction and even better health. We believe that higher education should be available to everyone who has the ability to benefit. That means providing adequate financial support for students, levelling the playing field for part-time students, and supporting the true costs of teaching so that universities can continue to provide a higher education experience which is amongst the best in the world.

**1**

We want the next Government to provide grants for students from poor backgrounds and ensure that everyone with the potential to benefit from higher education has the opportunity to do so.

**2**

Universities also provide bursaries to students and will increase the support they offer using the income from fees from 2006. We want the next Government to ensure that potential students know about the financial assistance that will be available to them, as well as the costs of higher education.

**3**

In 2002/03 part-time students made up approximately 40% of the student population, but they do not enjoy the same levels of financial support as full-time students. We look to the next Government to move to greater equity of treatment for part- and full-time students, based on sound evidence about their needs.

**4**

Universities are committed to providing the courses that students want to study and the skills employers need for their businesses. The importance of learning for its own sake should also be recognised. We want to work in partnership with the next Government to ensure these interests are balanced, without compromising institutional autonomy.

**5**

Students, particularly those from relatively disadvantaged backgrounds, sometimes need extra help to succeed at university. It can cost over 30% more to support and teach a student from an educationally disadvantaged background compared to other students. We look to the next Government to ensure that the costs of teaching a wider range of students are reflected in public funding for teaching.

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## World class research

We want the Government to:

- Maintain the Dual Support System.
- Meet the Lisbon goal of investing 3% GDP in research and development.
- Ensure no further concentration of public funding for research.
- Ensure the stable and predictable distribution of public research funds.
- Support the full costs of publicly funded research.
- Encourage business to forge links with universities.



# World class research

The UK is the second greatest university research power in the world. With only 1% of the world's population, the UK produces 9% of the world's scientific papers, and 13% of the most highly cited. It wins 10% of internationally recognised science prizes and has produced 44 Nobel Prize winners in the last 50 years. UK research productivity is far superior to that of the US: in the UK academics produce 16 research papers for every \$1m invested compared with the 10 produced in the US and 4 in Japan.

## 1

We urge the next Government to recognise the contribution that university research makes to the UK's economic competitiveness and quality of life by maintaining the Dual Support system for research funding, and building on the recent increased public investment by meeting the targets set out in the ten year science strategy, *Science and innovation framework 2004-2014*.

## 2

We ask the next Government to work with universities and business to make the UK the world's most attractive destination for science and innovation by meeting the Lisbon goal of investing 3% of GDP in research and development by 2010.

## 3

We urge the next Government not to concentrate public investment in research further, but to recognise that the future strength of UK research depends on supporting emerging and already excellent research.

## 4

We urge the next Government to work with the higher education funding councils to ensure that the way funding is distributed is transparent and well understood in advance of the next Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) in 2008. Some university departments have closed, and others are vulnerable to closure in part because of unanticipated cuts in research funding for departments rated 4 and below in the last RAE. If universities are to plan strategically and manage their finances well, they must be able to plan on the basis of stable funding.

## 5

We look to the next Government to ensure that they pay 100% of the cost of publicly funded university research whether from the UK or EU. In the past, Government funded grants have not covered overheads, such as buildings and equipment, and universities have struggled to break even. The future sustainability of the UK's research strength depends on universities recovering the full costs of the research they do.

## 6

We look to the Government to implement the Lambert Review's proposals for increased funding to encourage business and industry to engage with universities. Stronger university-business links will be critical to driving forward the UK's innovative knowledge economy.

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## International Competitiveness

We want the Government to:

- Promote UK higher education internationally. 
- Encourage international students to choose UK higher education.
- Give matched funding for participation in EU research projects.
- Support UK higher education as the Bologna Process develops.

# International competitiveness

Higher education is one of the UK's most successful exports. The benefits to the UK of our reputation for excellent teaching and research are enormous. Our universities foster links across the world – with individuals, with companies, with research partnerships, with Governments – driving innovation and development, enriching our culture and enhancing the UK's standing in the world.

## 1

We want the next Government to promote UK higher education internationally. It should be the shared aim of universities and Government that the UK is the country of choice for international students.

## 2

We look to the next Government to ensure that our universities are equipped to deal with increasing competition from other nations by removing barriers to participation by international students in UK higher education. Specifically, we call on the next Government to remove or reduce charges for international students who need to extend their visas in order to complete their studies, and to drop plans to abolish the right of appeal for international students who are refused visas.

## 3

We call on the Government to provide additional funds to make up the full costs of EU funded research – as other European Governments already do. UK universities are amongst the most successful in competition for European research funds, but without more support from the next Government, it will become increasingly difficult to compete.

## 4

The UK assumes the Presidency of the European Union in 2005. We look to the next Government to support UK universities as the Bologna Process develops, to ensure that UK universities are able to play a full part in the emerging European Higher Education Area.

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## Autonomy and accountability

We want the Government to:

- Reduce the burden of regulation.
- Defend universities' complete autonomy over admissions.
- Ensure that the Office for Fair Access does not set targets or quotas.
- Give universities freedom to spend public funds according to their priorities.
- Undertake Regulatory Impact Assessments on all new proposals and initiatives.



# Autonomy and accountability

A defining characteristic of our universities is their autonomy, which has provided the foundation for their success, diversity and reputation for quality. Universities have a duty to preserve their independence from Government in the long-term interests of the country. Government has a responsibility to protect academic freedom. Equally, as recipients of large amounts of public money, universities recognise that they must be accountable.

## 1

We look to the next Government to ensure that regulation does not compromise university autonomy, and accountability does not impose a disproportionate burden. We ask the next Government to introduce a lighter regulatory regime, proportionate to risk, as recommended in the Lambert Review.

## 2

Universities are committed to widening participation, and to attracting applicants from a full range of backgrounds. However, we look to the next Government to ensure that universities remain solely responsible for decisions about which students they admit.

## 3

We ask the Government to ensure that the Office for Fair Access acts within its remit by encouraging and supporting universities' own efforts to widen participation. It should not set targets or quotas.

## 4

We look to the next Government to enable universities to plan strategically by allowing them flexibility in the way they use public funds, and to reduce the amount of money tied to special initiatives.

## 5

We want the next Government to consider the burden that policy proposals would impose on universities and weigh up the costs and benefits of their policies. Public and private funds invested in universities should not be wasted on unnecessary bureaucracy. We look to the next Government to undertake Regulatory Impact Assessments of all new proposals.

## Further Information

Universities UK is a membership organisation representing the 120 heads of all UK universities and some higher education colleges. We promote and support their work by speaking on their behalf to Government, Parliament, other sector bodies and a wide variety of other stakeholders. We also provide research into issues affecting the higher education sector, disseminate important information, and bring people together to share knowledge and experience.

Universities UK works to achieve a vision of UK universities that are autonomous, properly funded from a diversity of sources, accessible to all, delivering high quality teaching and learning, and at the leading edge of research of regional, national and international significance.

Universities UK has three National Councils, representing England and Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales.

Universities UK also provides services to Parliament by issuing briefings, publishing research to inform public debate, bringing together the heads of universities with Parliamentarians, and providing information on request.

For further information about the work of our universities and how you can support them, please contact:

**John Wrathmell**

Parliamentary Officer  
Universities UK

**telephone**

+44 (0)20 7419 5409

**email**

[John.Wrathmell@UniversitiesUK.ac.uk](mailto:John.Wrathmell@UniversitiesUK.ac.uk)

**or visit our website**

[www.UniversitiesUK.ac.uk](http://www.UniversitiesUK.ac.uk)

Notes



**Universities UK**

Woburn House  
20 Tavistock Square  
London WC1H 9HQ

**telephone**

+44 (0)20 7419 4111

**fax**

+44 (0)20 7388 8649

**email**

info@UniversitiesUK.ac.uk

**website**

www.UniversitiesUK.ac.uk

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