

MillionPlus General Election Manifesto 2017

Modern universities are hugely important to the UK. They are major forces in their local communities and regional economies and have teaching and research partnerships with universities throughout the world. As the UK exits the European Union, the next government must value and work with the UK's modern universities to boost the economy, provide the skills needed for the future and improve social mobility.

As a sector, UK universities are worth an annual £73bn to the UK economy (2.8% of UK GDP) but our universities also have a wider role in promoting ideas, strengthening society and offering new opportunities regardless of background, age or culture. Their influence and activities impact on every constituency in all countries of the UK.

**1.07
million**

2.15 million students study at UK universities in 2016, half at modern universities

Support every community and region

Modern universities are at the heart of their communities as centres of learning, degree apprenticeships, innovation hubs and in their support for companies, small businesses, local authorities and our public services. These universities are key to addressing regional inequalities in growth, meeting the challenges faced by key sectors and improving productivity. To ensure continued success and innovation the next government should:

- **work with modern universities to deliver an industrial strategy** that supports regional growth
- **ensure that universities are at the heart of initial teacher training** and career-long professional development for teachers to address problems of teacher shortage and retention
- **write-off the student loans of nurses and NHS professional staff** in England who work in the NHS after qualification and restore funding for continued professional development which is vital to improved and integrated health and social care
- **replace current EU structural and regional funds** with a new and increased regional growth fund in which universities are valued as key partners

In partnership with schools, modern universities educate our future teachers, with **65%** of all students studying Initial Teacher Training doing so at a modern university



Improve the funding system to meet the needs of students, universities and business

There is a growing concern that, as fees rise and student loans increase in England, the higher education funding system is becoming less sustainable and seen as less affordable for both full-time students and those who want to study part-time or return to education when they are older. Students undoubtedly directly benefit from their university experience and qualifications but the wider benefits to the economy and to society of higher education should be better reflected in a new and more balanced approach.

Reviewing the contributions made by students and graduates to the costs of their higher education has the potential to be more cost-effective for taxpayers in the long-run and promote far greater social mobility. Modern universities, in particular, have a fantastic track record of improving outcomes for people of all backgrounds and ages and should be supported to unlock the potential and unearth the talent of future generations of students.

The next government should therefore:

- **review the sustainability of the current funding model for students and universities** in England to make it both fair and economically viable
- **restore student maintenance grants** to ensure that those from the low-income households are not put off studying for a degree
- commit to do much more to **support people who want to study part-time or return to study later in life**

Back UK research

Over half of the research produced by modern universities is judged to be world-leading or internationally excellent

The UK has a global reputation for research, but currently invests only 1.7% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) directly in science, research and innovation – less than the OECD average of 2.4%, and the 3% of Japan, Sweden, and South Korea.

We know that greater direct investment in research results in greater private investment as well, and that this investment can help develop the techniques, products and skills that the UK will need for the future. The next government must resolve this imbalance, and ensure that the

increased funding is spread across the whole sector, to build on the excellent research base in modern universities. Modern universities have strong links to industry, a record of engagement with new and emerging market, successfully support graduate entrepreneurs and small businesses and are well-placed to ensure that additional funding delivers improvements in the UK's productivity.

The next government should:

- **raise the level of investment in UK science and research to 3%**
- **guarantee to replace any EU research funding** that is lost after Brexit
- **redistribute new funding for translational research** to universities which are active in their regions

Secure our post-Brexit Future

The European Union provides access to a market of 500 million people and Europe will continue to be extremely important to the UK's universities after Brexit. From the immense value of EU staff currently working in our universities, to having valuable access to EU students, and to the research partnerships built up over decades, it is vital that the UK continues to have an extremely healthy and beneficial relationship with the EU.

As such the next government must:

- **guarantee EU staff and citizens the right to remain** as soon as possible, and in the longer-term **develop a light-touch work-permit scheme** to allow universities to recruit talented individuals
- **negotiate a temporary residency scheme or visa-free access for EU students** studying in the UK and for UK students studying in Europe, to tap into this talent pipeline and keep the UK competitive



- explore the potential for **reciprocal funding arrangements** to support student mobility, boost student numbers coming to the UK and **enable UK students to study across Europe**
- **negotiate the UK's continued membership of Horizon 2020 and other research programmes**
- remain open to allowing **access to the European Court of Justice as the EU's arbitration court for trade agreements, research and other collaborative programmes**. Without such jurisdiction, entry to these valuable programmes will be impossible

Make the UK the world's most desirable place for study

People from across the world want to study in the UK and international students enhance the cultural and academic life of our universities. Economically they add £10.8bn to the UK's export earnings per year and spend £5.4bn in regional economies, supporting over 200,000 jobs.

It is vital that the UK builds on its reputation as a destination of choice for international students.

The next government should:

- **take international students out of migration targets**, to help address the UK's declining market share
- develop a strategy to reduce barriers and boost recruitment by introducing **a light-touch and low cost visa regime for international students**
- **create a new post-study work visa route** to meet the needs of businesses and communities across the UK

Education exports will reach

£17billion by 2025

Our world-leading modern universities are a major UK success story and BIS estimates that the total value of higher education exports will reach £17bn by 2025

34% of all international students study at modern universities, helping to boost both the economy and the UK's global reputation



Partnerships



MillionPlus universities have **685 partner institutions** in **435 cities** in **81 countries**. Conducting research across all **7 continents**.

MillionPlus is the Association for Modern Universities, representing modern universities across the UK. Visit our website at www.millionplus.ac.uk for more details, or contact us on 020 7717 1655 or info@millionplus.ac.uk