

The Spring Budget 2023

Modern universities make up over half of the UK's higher education sector, educating over a million students a year and are major anchor institutions, generating £17bn in expenditure-related gross value add. These institutions are also drivers of social mobility and an important cog in the Government's levelling up agenda. The Government **should reaffirm or implement the following proposals** in the Spring Budget to support our world-leading universities and boost the skills agenda.

Students are at the sharp end of the cost-of-living crisis, with MillionPlus [research](#) showing that nearly 300,000 students are at risk due to spiralling costs, with traditionally underrepresented groups in higher education likely to be hit the hardest. While universities are providing additional support, further intervention is needed. **The Government should increase maintenance funding for students, ideally through grants, and ensure students are included in any further cost-of-living measures introduced. The Government should also conduct a review of maintenance loan support to allow them to be adjusted with inflation when higher than forecast.**



Modern universities are committed to environmental sustainability and energy efficiency. However, the substantial rise in energy costs is having a significant impact on modern universities' finances, while there are many competing calls on their budgets and they face continued real-term cuts to funding. **The Government should extend the existing Energy Bill Relief Scheme for 12 months to support universities through this challenging period.**



Issues around recruitment and retention of teachers are long-standing, exacerbated by the cost-of-living crisis impacting on applications for the upcoming year. **The Government should apply an in-year uplift to initial teacher training bursaries to help tackle these concerns while prioritising the strategic planning of bursaries for future years.**



MillionPlus's recent report '[Who trains the nurses – universities and the placement shortfall](#)' identified that a 20% increase on forecast numbers would be needed to meet nursing targets. Working with NHS Trusts and Boards across the UK, modern universities stand ready to support this increase but reforming nursing clinical placements is vital. **The Government should invest in expanding clinical placements in the NHS and social care to enable a pipeline of skilled workers.**



To alleviate workforce shortages, **the Government should explore fee-loan forgiveness for trainee teachers and nurses.**



Modern universities produce applied and translational research which delivers impact in their communities. MillionPlus welcomes the Government's commitment to R&D and calls for **this investment to be focused on supporting regional economic growth, for example through the Higher Education Innovation Fund and the Shared Prosperity Fund. Securing full UK access to the Horizon scheme should be a Government priority.**

