

HE Policy Update - election special – Party Manifestos (Part 2)

w/e 29 Nov 2019

Here's an update on [last week's election special](#) on the party manifestos.

Below is a summary of the main aspects relating to education and research from the latest election manifestos. Where relevant page references are included after the headline statement so you can read the full relevant text of the elements which interest you.

And some links for you:

- [Sky News manifesto checker](#)
- [Full Fact](#) are fact checking the manifestos
- [Politico have a tool](#) to compare Labour, the Lib Dems and the Conservatives
- [The IfS](#) are looking at the manifestos and they also did a [briefing on HE funding](#)

We'll be doing our own comparison of the policies soon!

Plaid Cymru

[Plaid Cymru's manifesto](#) came out on Friday 22nd November

They have “5 key pledges to make Wales matter”, including:

4. Empowering Young People – ensuring continued access to the Erasmus+ education exchange programme, full implementation of the Youth Guarantee Scheme and access to the EU railcard.

In more detail:

- *Access to high quality education and training at all levels and for all is crucial if we are to ensure that every citizen can reach their full potential. Plaid Cymru will strive to ensure continued access to educational and cultural exchange programmes, including Erasmus+ which has provided opportunities for links between individuals, regions and countries, creating diverse cultural and business opportunities. In 2016 alone, 2235 students from Wales received Erasmus+ grants to study abroad, and Wales has received over £26 million for educational and cultural schemes from Erasmus in the last 4 years. Every young person should have the opportunity to participate in an exchange programme, regardless of financial background or educational career.*
- *To enhance the benefits made available to young people through our continued membership of the EU, in Wales, a Plaid Cymru government will ensure we have the skills necessary to prosper. We will create a new network of specialist National Colleges of Vocational Education, for 14+ and post-compulsory education.*
- *We will combat the enormous and debilitating brain drain that we face, as currently many of our brightest students cross the border to study and stay in England. We will create an incentive for those students who remain or return to live and work in Wales after graduating, helping to retain our brightest young people and strengthen our economy. Remaining within the EU will benefit our students and our universities through access to crucial research funding. In 2015/16 alone, Welsh Universities received £25 million in research funding from the EU.*

HE

- Undertake a review of the funding offer for Welsh domiciled undergraduate and post graduate students in respect of both tuition fees and living costs (p40).
- Provide a subsidy to students resident in Wales who wish to study in Wales (p40).

- Target groups and those studying subjects vital to the Welsh economy and public goals will pay no tuition fees in Wales, including those taking up key healthcare posts, studying science, engineering and technology subjects and students from particularly challenging backgrounds (p40).
- Increase funding for degree apprentices in Wales (p41).
- Guarantee to replace EU funding which supported research in higher education in the event of Brexit (p41).
- Protect inward and outward student mobility post-Brexit, including participation in Erasmus+ or any successor schemes and cross-border study on the island of Ireland (p41).

FE

- Increase college lecturer pay in Wales to ensure parity with schoolteachers in terms of base hourly pay (p41).
- Establish a paid student officer position for each college to ensure student unions are securely established in the FE sector (p41).
- Make public transport free for all FE/6th form students and apprentices in Wales below age 21 in full time education or training (p41).
- All apprentices under the age of 21 should be partnered with a Further Education college to ensure appropriate support, including access to college days or off-site training/education for key skills or other appropriate education choices (p41).

Conservative

The [Conservative manifesto](#) was launched on Sunday 24th November

In terms of mentions of HE, it starts well, with this in the introduction (p2): *“We have many of the best universities on earth”*.

And again on page 32: *“We have more world-class universities than anywhere in Europe.”*

We are mentioned in immigration policy (pages 20 and 22):

- *“Actively recruiting **leaders in their field** to come to the UK. The small number of the best technology and science graduates from the top universities in the world and those who win top scientific prizes will be offered fast-track entry to the UK –these people can do more than any others to drive scientific progress and help our NHS and our economy.”*
- *“Our **student visa** will help universities attract talented young people and allow those students to stay on to apply for work here after they graduate.”*

We come up in the new “Towns Fund” (page 26:

- *New civic infrastructure. We have announced the largest cultural capital programme in a century, of £250 million. This will support local libraries and regional museums. We will work with local universities to do more for the education, health and prosperity of their local areas.”*

In terms of HE policy itself, there is a whole section on page 37:

“World-leading universities

The UK is home to leading universities, which attract students from all over the world, conduct vital research, and generate enormous benefits for our economy and our society. They also do an excellent job of generating many of the skills that our economy needs, producing globally renowned scientists, entrepreneurs and creators, and enabling millions of people to fulfil their potential.

In the next Parliament we will work to maintain and strengthen our global position in higher education. The Augar Review made thoughtful recommendations on tuition fee levels, the balance of funding between universities, further education and apprenticeships and adult learning, and we will consider them carefully.

We will look at the interest rates on loan repayments with a view to reducing the burden of debt on students.

We also will continue to explore ways to tackle the problem of grade inflation and low quality courses, and improve the application and offer system for undergraduate students. Our approach will be underpinned by a commitment to fairness, quality of learning and teaching, and access.

We will also strengthen academic freedom and free speech in universities and continue to focus on raising standards.

We will strengthen universities and colleges' civic role. We will invest in local adult education and require the Office for Students to look at universities' success in increasing access across all ages, not just young people entering full-time undergraduate degrees

On NHS training (page 10):

- *50,000 more nurses, with students receiving a £5,000-£8,000 annual maintenance grant every year during their course to help with their cost of living – and they won't have to pay it back. Everyone will receive at least £5,000 with further funding in regions or disciplines that are struggling to recruit – such as mental health – and help with their childcare costs.*
- *6,000 more doctors in general practice and 6,000 more primary care professionals, such as physiotherapists and pharmacists. This is on top of the 7,500 extra nurse associates and 20,000 primary care professionals that we have already announced.*

And on research (page 40):

We are committing to the fastest ever increase in domestic public R&D spending, including in basic science research to meet our target of 2.4 per cent of GDP being spent on R&D across the economy. Some of this new spending will go to a new agency for high-risk, high-payoff research, at arm's length from government. We will continue to support our outstanding science sector as we leave the EU.

Unlike Corbyn's Labour, we will not spend blindly and wastefully.

- *We will focus our efforts on areas where the UK can generate a commanding lead in the industries of the future – life sciences, clean energy, space, design, computing, robotics and artificial intelligence.*
- *In particular, we will make the UK the leading global hub for life sciences after Brexit.*
- *We will use our £1 billion Ayrton Fund to develop affordable and accessible clean energy that will improve lives and help us to lead the world in tackling climate change.*
- *We will use our increased R&D funding from Government to attract and kickstart private investment.*
- *We will support international collaboration and exchange and ensure UK teams can recruit the skills and talent they need from abroad.*
- *We will reform the science funding system to cut the time wasted by scientists filling in forms.*
- *We will unlock long-term capital in pension funds to invest in and commercialise our scientific discoveries, creating a vibrant science-based economy post-Brexit.*
- *We will continue to collaborate internationally and with the EU on scientific research, including Horizon.*

These unprecedented increases to the science budget will be used to drive forward the development of technologies of critical importance to the UK, by investing in clusters around world-leading universities and spreading knowledge.

There are some specific references to research in the document:

- *(page 7) We will also prioritise the environment in the next Budget, investing in the infrastructure, science and research that will deliver economic growth, not just through the 2020s, but for decades to come.*

- (page 12) We also want to save millions of people, and their families, from suffering the agony of a slow decline due to dementia. We will make finding a cure one of our Government's biggest collective priorities – one of the 'grand challenges' that will define our future along with the impact of climate change or artificial intelligence. This will include doubling research funding into dementia and speeding up trials for new treatments.
- (page 40) We will invest in world-class computing and health data systems that can aid research, such as the ground-breaking genetic sequencing carried out at the UK Biobank, Genomics England and the new Accelerating the Detection of Disease project, which has the potential to transform diagnosis and treatment

On education more generally, there is a section on schools investment (page 13)

- Talent is evenly spread in this country, but opportunity is not.
- In his first months in office, Boris Johnson announced an extra £14 billion in funding for schools. That translates to £150 million a week, and will include at least £5,000 a year for each secondary school pupil and at least £4,000 for each primary school pupil. This also includes £780 million in new funding to support children with Special Educational Needs next year alone.
- ... We want to attract the best talent into teaching and recognise the great work they do, so we're raising teachers' starting salaries to £30,000 – among the most competitive in the graduate labour market.
- We also want to build on our record of raising standards, improving behaviour and promoting knowledge and creativity.
 - ...We will expand our programme to help schools with the worst behaviour learn from the best – and back heads to use exclusions.
 - Unlike Labour, we believe that Ofsted inspection serves a valuable purpose not just in improving standards but in improving behaviour. We will continue to help teachers tackle bullying, including homophobic bullying....
 -We will continue to support innovation, like our successful maths schools, ...We will expand 'alternative provision' schools for those who have been excluded. We will also deliver more school places for children with complex Special Educational Needs. We will intervene in schools where there is entrenched underperformance. We will continue to ensure that parents can choose the schools that best suit their children and best prepare them for the future. And we will continue to build more free schools.
 - We will invest in arts, music and sport.We retain our commitment to the core subjects and also want young people to learn creative skills and widen their horizons, so we will offer an 'arts premium' to secondary schools to fund enriching activities for all pupils. And to ensure children are getting an active start to life, we will invest in primary school PE teaching and ensure that it is being properly delivered. ...

On skills (page 36)

- ...we will go further and require significant numbers of new UK apprentices for all big new infrastructure projects – new hospitals, new schools, major transport projects and so on, being built with pride by a new generation of British workers.
- ...As the centrepiece of our plan, we will create a new National Skills Fund worth £3 billion over the next Parliament. This fund will provide matching funding for individuals and SMEs for high-quality education and training. A proportion will be reserved for further strategic investment in skills, and we will consult widely on the overall design.

- *...Just as universities have been transformed by significant long-term investment over the last few decades, we need to make sure local colleges are equally excellent places for people to learn. We are therefore investing almost £2 billion to upgrade the entire further education college estate.*
- *And we'll also have 20 Institutes of Technology, which connect high-quality teaching in science, technology, engineering and maths to business and industry.*

Brexit Party

The Brexit Party announced they aren't having a manifesto – instead they are offering [a contract](#), also launched on Friday.

Some HE and education related highlights:

- *Require Universities to incorporate an obligation to protect legal free speech.*
- *Invest in young people: scrap interest on student loans, which will improve the debt recovery rate, and introduce a new workable apprenticeship scheme.*
- *Maintain subsidies and grants paid by the EU to UK businesses such as farmers, fisheries, universities and research bodies: this is our money anyway, recycled by the EU.*
- *Re-open the nursing and midwifery professions to recruitment without the degree requirement, alongside a new nursing qualification in social care.*
- *Britain's future in the world depends on improving our education for young people and giving employers a positive role in training and apprenticeships. We pledge to:*
 - *Further expand parental choice – academies and free schools have improved results.*
 - *Abolish student loan interest.*
 - *Abolish the target to push 50% of young people into Higher Education.*
 - *Scrap the cumbersome Apprentice Levy – apprenticeships have collapsed. Improve tax incentives for employers to take on genuine apprentices.*

DUP

We reported the content of the DUP manifesto in last week's tranche of manifesto summaries. The DUP have not released the content online, however, it should appear [here](#) shortly.

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