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Luke Hall MP
Minister for Skills, Apprenticeships and Higher Education

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Raj Jethwa
Chief Executive
Universities and Colleges Employers Association

By email: R.Jethwa@ucea.ac.uk

16 April 2024

Dear Mr Jethwa,

Thank you so much for writing to my predecessor on 18 March, about higher education (HE) participation in the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS). I would be grateful if you could share a copy of this letter with your co-signatory, Vivienne Stern, Chief Executive of Universities UK.

I am aware that you discussed your concerns relating to the TPS with Mr Halfon. I want to assure you that the department is considering the issue of HE membership in the TPS closely and is discussing this with HM Treasury, and departmental officials will keep you informed as to the progress of these discussions.

As Mr Halfon previously made clear, the government will continue to work with the HE sector to explore how it can best support those providers affected by the increased employer contribution rate, including planning effectively for implementation.

You also highlighted the financial impact of a fall in international student recruitment. The government is extremely proud of the UK's world class HE sector and recognises the contribution made by our international students. We are proud to have met our international student recruitment ambition in the International Education Strategy for the past two years.

However, it is important that the government has a fair and robust migration policy, while also maintaining the UK's place as a top destination for the best and brightest from around the world. We saw the number of dependants coming to the UK rise from 16,000 in 2019 to 143,000 in 2023, an unprecedented increase, and have taken action to reduce this number. From January, we restricted the ability for students to bring dependants to those studying postgraduate research courses. This decision strikes the right balance, and we expect the UK will remain a highly attractive study destination.

I recognise the importance of a financially sustainable HE sector. Sustainable, high-quality HE not only develops academic talents and produces world-class research, it is also key to advancing social justice. For this reason, I want to assure you that the government remains committed to supporting our world leading HE sector to thrive. This is why we continue to provide significant financial support, nearly £6 billion per year, to the HE sector, plus more than £10 billion per year in tuition fee loans.

Thank you also for your kind invitation to meet to discuss these issues. Due to diary commitments, I am sadly unable to meet at this time, but I would welcome a meeting in the near future to understand more about the issues facing the HE sector.

Thank you for writing on this important matter.

With very best wishes,



Luke Hall MP
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