



**Science, Innovation
and Technology
Committee**

Monday, 30 June 2025

Rt. Hon. Peter Kyle MP
Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology
By email only

Subject: Support for the future of the higher education sector

Dear Peter,

In a recent appearance at the Science, Innovation and Technology Committee, Professor Dame Ottoline Leyser highlighted the crucial role of the Department of Science Innovation and Technology in supporting the future of the higher education sector.

While the recently published Industrial Strategy highlights universities as critical to delivering the government's strategic aims, the support outlined appears targeted at specific sectors rather than addressing the systemic challenges faced by many higher education institutions.

Further, although the recent Spending Review set out a welcome commitment to increased research and development funding, the only mention of the higher education system was an "intention to explore introducing a levy on higher education provider income from international students to be reinvested into the higher education and skills system".

In light of the above, I would be grateful if you could confirm:

- how DSIT intends to support the higher education sector, which drives the UK's significant research strengths, as it faces considerable financial challenges;
- how DSIT is working together with the Department for Education to co-ordinate support for the higher education sector;
- whether DSIT or DfE is ultimately responsible for ensuring a critical mass of departments in areas such as mathematics, which underpin the UK's research base, remain operational as universities consider departmental closures?



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- how DSIT intends to support diversification in the higher education system and encourage universities to “develop their own unique strategies”; and
- what assessment DSIT has made of the impact of consolidation (if such a process is unavoidable) on the UK’s research and development base?

I would be grateful if you could respond by Tuesday 15 July. I intend to place a copy of this letter in the public domain.

I am copying the chair of the Education Committee and Professor Dame Ottoline Leyser.

Thank you for your continued engagement with the work of the Committee.

With best wishes,

Dame Chi Onwurah MP
Chair, Science, Innovation and Technology Committee