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**London
Economics**

General Election Briefings: Examination of higher education fees and funding

Project overview

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About London Economics

London Economics is one of Europe's leading specialist economics and policy consultancies and has its head office in London.

We advise clients in both the public and private sectors on economic and financial analysis, policy development and evaluation, business strategy, and regulatory and competition policy. Our consultants are highly qualified economists with experience in applying a wide variety of analytical techniques to assist our work, including cost-benefit analysis, multi-criteria analysis, policy simulation, scenario building, statistical analysis, and mathematical modelling. We are also experienced in using a wide range of data collection techniques including literature reviews, survey questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups.

With a dedicated division of professional economists specialised in education and labour markets, we have unparalleled experience across the education sector. As a result of our independence and the quality of the analysis we undertake, we are considered sector experts, and often deliver economic insight to key policy makers and stakeholders. Our experience covers a wide spectrum of clients – including UK Central Government Departments and Non-Departmental Public Bodies, Devolved Governments, university Mission Groups, university and college membership associations, think-tanks, unions, individual higher education and further education institutions, and regulators. Our client base also includes the European Commission, the OECD, and Government Departments in different EU Member States.

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Project summary

Higher education (HE) funding has resulted in major political divisions across the UK since the 1990s. Most major political parties have made significant manifesto commitments at successive elections or following unsuccessful electoral campaigns. However, capitalising on a widespread lack of understanding of higher education funding systems, many of these pledges have been short-sighted; have had adverse impacts on specific groups of students and graduates; and have led to a number of unintended consequences. The complexity of the policy area has resulted in several independent cross-party reviews being undertaken, sometimes in a specific attempt to avoid higher education fees and funding becoming a General Election issue.

Building on more than a decade of London Economics' research on higher education funding systems across the four Home Nations, funded by the Nuffield Foundation, this study aims to:

- **Improve the wider understanding of the UK's HE fees and funding systems** among the public, media, and HE commentators, in order to support high-quality debate and well-informed voting decisions. After the completion of the final stages of analysis and modelling (**Stage 1**), this will be achieved through:
 - The publication of a series of newspaper articles alongside wider media engagement (**Stage 2**);
 - The publication of briefing notes in each Home Nation highlighting the resource implications of each of the higher education funding systems for the government, higher education institutions and students/graduates (also **Stage 2**); and
 - The staging public free-to-access events in each Home Nation (**Stage 3**);
- **Supply key evidence and analytical capability** to support the development of policies and pledges of UK mainstream political parties so that manifesto commitments are evidence based. This will be achieved through **active engagement with political parties in all Home Nations** and the **provision of analytical support** ahead of the General Election (**Stage 4**); and
- Drive up the reliability and accuracy of public claims through the publication of **transparent and impartial assessments of the parties' policies and pledges** in each Home Nation ahead of the next General Election, through a series of briefing notes and media briefings (**Stage 5**).

Figure 1 Project overview



Source: London Economics

Getting in touch

If you would like to get in touch with London Economics to discuss any elements of the project, or to support or contribute in any way to the work, we would be happy to hear from you.



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