

General Election 2019 briefing

GE result briefing

The Conservatives have won an outright majority of seats overnight with 365 Members of Parliament elected. The prime minister, Boris Johnson, now has the backing he craved to get his Brexit deal through parliament, and it looks like the UK will be leaving the EU on or before 31 January 2020. This is a briefing summarising the key points of the result of the general election and what this will mean for students and students unions.

What is in this briefing?

In this briefing we will look more in depth at the result of the general election and what this will mean for students and students' unions. This will include –

- Summary of the result
- Examination of the manifesto promises and likely policy agenda of new government
- Advice on how to engage with your new MP

General election result

650 MPs were elected on Friday. For a political party to be able to get legislation through parliament, set the agenda and set new laws it needs to command a majority in the House of Commons. This result gives the new Conservative government a majority of 80, their biggest electoral victory since 1987.

Party	Seats	Vote share
Conservative	365	43.6%
Labour	203	32.1%
SNP	48	3.9%
Liberal Democrats	11	11.5%
DUP	8	0.8%
Sinn Féin	7	0.6%

Plaid Cymru	4	0.5%
SDLP	2	0.4%
Green	1	2.7%
Alliance	1	0.4%
Brexit	0	2.0%

The result included many seats in the so-called Labour 'red wall' electing a Conservative MP for the first time in decades, which represented a major shift in the political landscape.

Following the result Jeremy Corbyn announced he would resign as leader of the Labour Party. The Labour Party National Executive Committee (NEC) is due to meet at the beginning of January to discuss the timeframe for the election of a new leader, but it is likely that this will take place during the first quarter of next year with a new leader to be in place in March.

Jo Swinson, leader of the Liberal Democrats, lost her seat, in East Dunbartonshire, at this election and so the party will also have to elect a new leader. There are no details on when this will be yet. In the interim, the party has appointed two acting co-leaders, Sir Ed Davey (MP for Kingston and Surbiton) and Baroness Brinton (Lib Dem President).



national union of **students**

Manifesto commitments

The Conservative manifesto was very short in comparison to previous elections and therefore may not give us a thorough indication of their whole policy agenda once in government. However, it is likely to form the basis of their term in office and there are some big policies that we are likely to see them enact.

Higher Education

The main commitment in the manifesto regarding all of tertiary education was to 'consider' the Augar review that was published at the end of May's premiership. This is a very vague promise so we cannot be sure what conclusions they will draw but it is unlikely that we will see a reduction in tuition fees any time soon.

Similarly, the Conservatives have made no promises on the reintroduction of maintenance grants, although this was a recommendation in the review.

They have pledged to reintroduce the NHS student bursary for nurses meaning every nursing and midwifery student in England will receive a means-tested bursary of between £5,000 and £8,000. It is unclear whether other healthcare professions such as physiotherapy or radiography will also qualify.

The party also vowed to tackle grade inflation and "low-quality" courses; improve the applications and offers system; strengthen academic freedom and free speech in universities; strengthen universities' civic role; and require the Office for Students to look at universities' success in increasing access across all ages.

Further Education, apprenticeships and skills

The Conservatives have restated their promises, first contained in the latest spending review, of more funding for FE and the manifesto also includes a commitment upgrade the whole FE estate in England with a £2 billion investment. The party expressed a desire to strengthen colleges' civic role. The manifesto also recycles the previous announcement of 20 Institutes of Technology across England.

There are plenty of mentions of apprenticeships in the manifesto, especially the need for more to work on infrastructure projects and the extension of nursing apprenticeships, but it is light on policy specifics.

The party has already pledged a £3 billion National Skills Fund and wants to invest £500 million of the Shared Prosperity Fund in skills for disadvantaged people.

Mental Health

The Conservatives' manifesto pledges to put mental health on par with physical health. It also said they will legislate to give patients with mental health conditions like anxiety and depression greater control over their treatment.

The party has also pledged more money for the NHS, more nurses, more hospitals and more GP appointments.

Immigration

They have pledged to introduce a student visa to help universities attract and retain international students. Their standout immigration policy is a plan for an Australian-style points-based immigration system designed to control immigration levels. The system will prioritise people who have a good grasp of English, have been law-abiding citizens in their home country, and have good education and qualifications. Most people coming into the country will need a clear job offer.



The party said this will ensure all immigrants are treated equally. Freedom of movement will come to an end, while the Tories have moved to guarantee the rights of EU citizens already living in the UK.

Housing

The manifesto proposes a 'Better Deal for Renters' which would abolish 'no-fault' evictions and require renters to pay only one 'lifetime' deposit which moves with the tenant. However, there are no policies to address the rising costs of student accommodation.

The Environment

The new government has set a target of net-zero emissions by 2050 – as recommended by the Committee on Climate Change.

To achieve this they plan to invest in sustainable homes, set up an independent Office for Environmental Protection, create a £640 million Nature for Climate Fund, deliver two million new green jobs, invest £4 billion in environmental projects and establish a £500 million Blue Plant Fund.

Democracy

The Conservatives want to maintain the voting age at 18 in England and will also now follow through on previous plans to introduce voter ID, despite widespread criticism for having a disproportionate impact on certain groups in society less likely to have photo ID.

The Conservatives will implement the recommendations of the boundary review to reduce the number of UK constituencies from 650 to 600.

The party will support the first-past-the-post system and abolish the Fixed Term Parliaments Act, pointing to the "paralysis" it caused at Westminster over Brexit.

Liberation and Society

They've pledged to host the UK's first international LGBT conference.

They also have non-specific pledges to tackle prejudice, racism and discrimination; respect equal rights; improve the quality of evidence and data on the barriers faced by different groups; and provide asylum and support for refugees

There is no mention of the Prevent duty, though an independent review commissioned by the last UK Government is ongoing.

How to engage with your new MP

Now that the votes have been counted you might find that you have a new MP for your local constituency. To find out if this is the case go to members.parliament.uk/constituencies/ and search by your postcode and location. Once you find your constituency this should tell you if you have a new or returning MP.

If you do have a new MP it would be a good idea to send them a letter of congratulations for their victory in the election and suggest that you would like to meet them as soon as possible to identify any ways that you can work together. Even if the MP does not represent a party that aligns closely with the issues that you are campaigning on they are still likely to be your parliamentary representative for the next 5 years so it would be helpful to establish a good working relationship.

We have drafted a suggested letter for you to send to your new MP below however it would be good to add in any personal details that you know about the person. Hopefully you will have also engaged with them during the election and can also include details of this in the letter.

Even if you do not have a new MP it would still be useful to send them a congratulatory note



and suggest a meeting. This should hopefully be more personalised and mention any previous engagement that you might have had with them.

If you do manage to set up a meeting with an MP there will be a few things for you to think about to make sure that you achieve what you would like to out of it. Firstly it can often be most useful to invite them to visit your SU or campus so that they can experience your environment and engage with students directly. You should also prepare by identifying in advance any areas of agreement that you can and joint ways that you might be able to campaign on these issues.

Dear ...

I am writing, on behalf of ... Students' Union, to congratulate you on your recent electoral victory. We are delighted that you will be our new MP and look forward to working closely with you going forward.

We represent ... students living and studying in your constituency and we are proud of the work we do in our local community. This year alone we have been campaigning too ... and would greatly appreciate your support with these initiatives.

It would be wonderful to arrange to meet with you as soon as you are available so that we may identify areas of shared interests and ways that we may work collaboratively on these shared goals. We would also be delighted for you to come to our campus so that you could hear first-hand about the issues that students care most about.

I look forward to hearing from you shortly.

Your sincerely,

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There may be other priorities that you have that they do not necessarily agree with yet and a meeting can be a good opportunity to lobby them for support with these. It is often helpful to construct a persuasive story on this beforehand. There is more guidance on the campaigning aspects of this engagement in guides that we produced during the election campaign including on [using storytelling in campaigns](#) and [analysing candidates](#).

Get in touch

If you have any questions or would like further information, please get in touch at policy@nus.org.uk.

Do also let us know if you do arrange any meetings with your MP!