

**WONKHE**

# Higher education policy

– what is it, where does it come from,  
and what does it mean for you?

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# Why might you care?

## IT'S INTERESTING

How the country is run and how decisions are made is legitimately fascinating.

## IT AFFECTS YOU

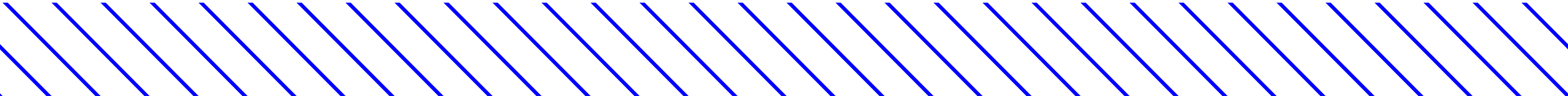
Every aspect of your life is impacted by policy decisions. You have the chance to input into it.

## IT AFFECTS JOBS

Your job exists because of a policy decision. It will change and evolve based on policy decisions.

## IT HELPS YOU PLAN

If you know what is coming, you can prepare for it and work towards it.

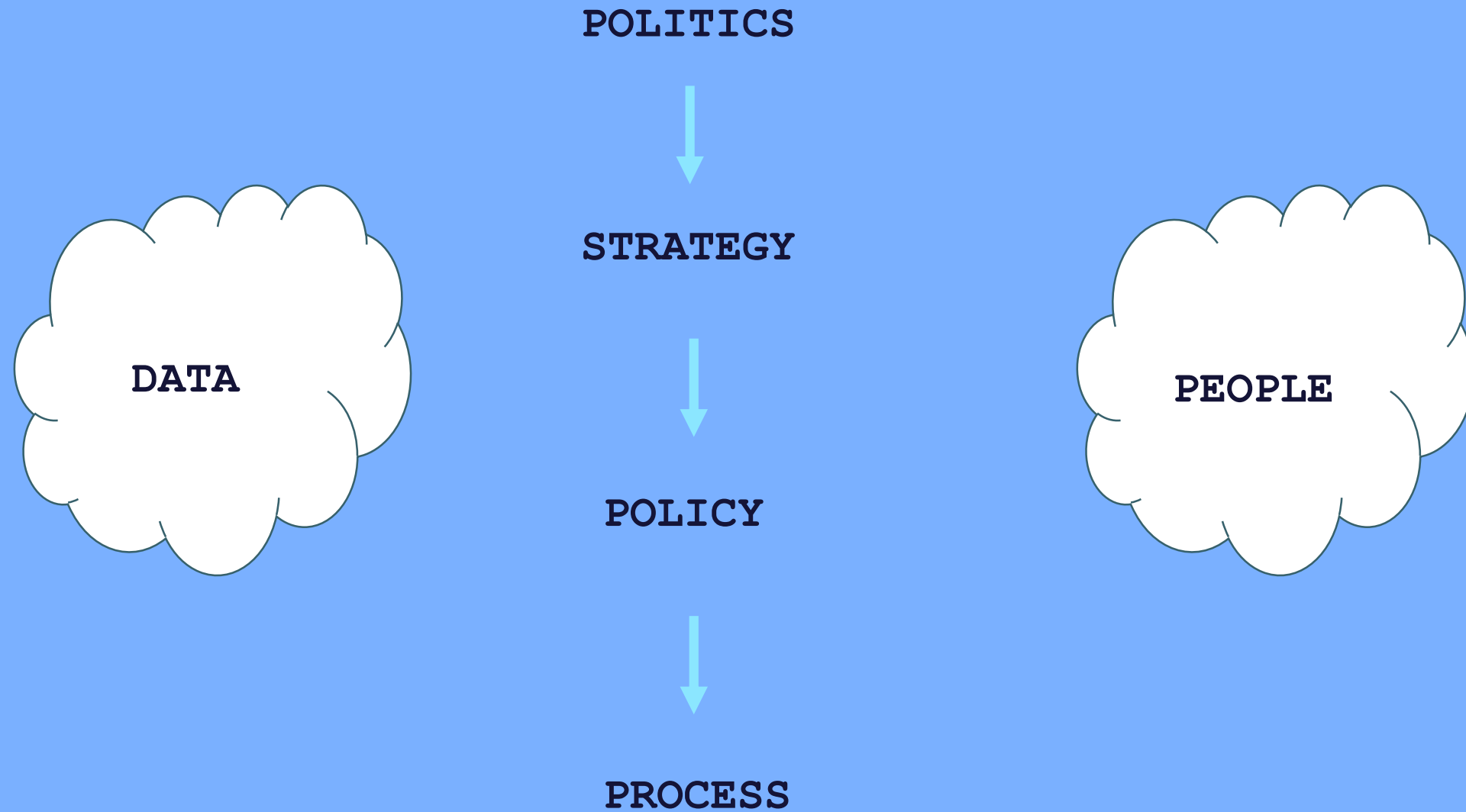


“  
Higher  
education  
policy, politics,  
and people

The old Wonkhe slogan

A while ago

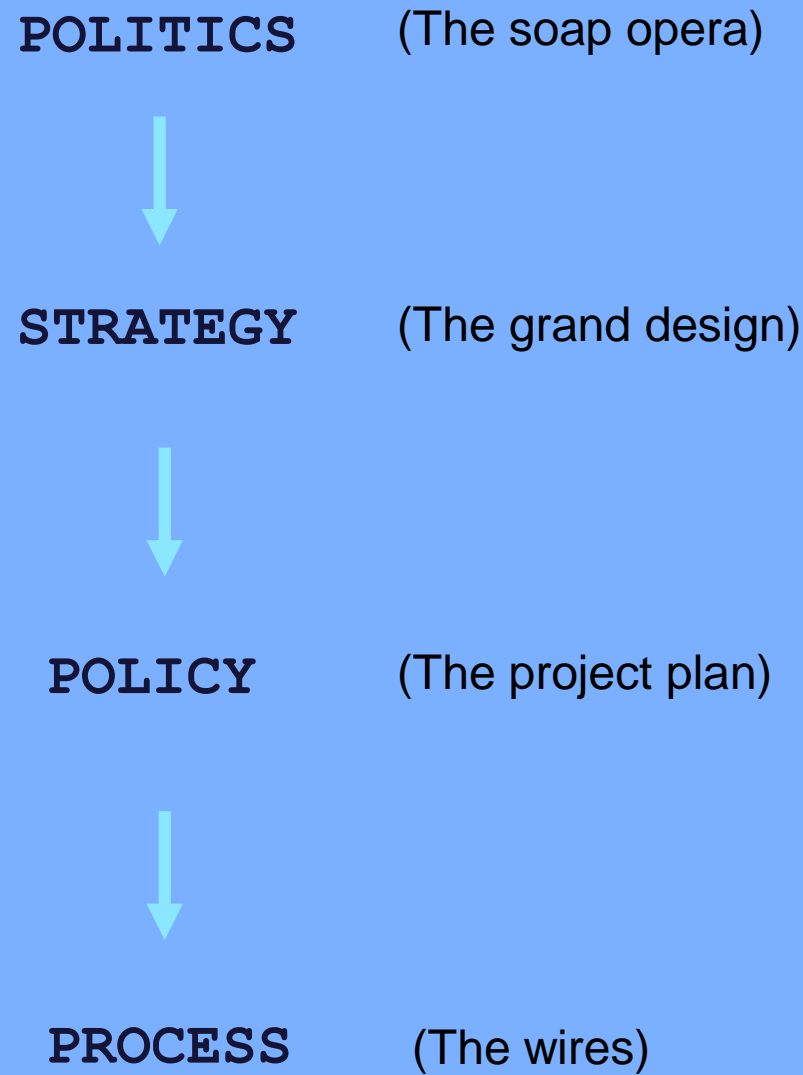
# A typology (1)



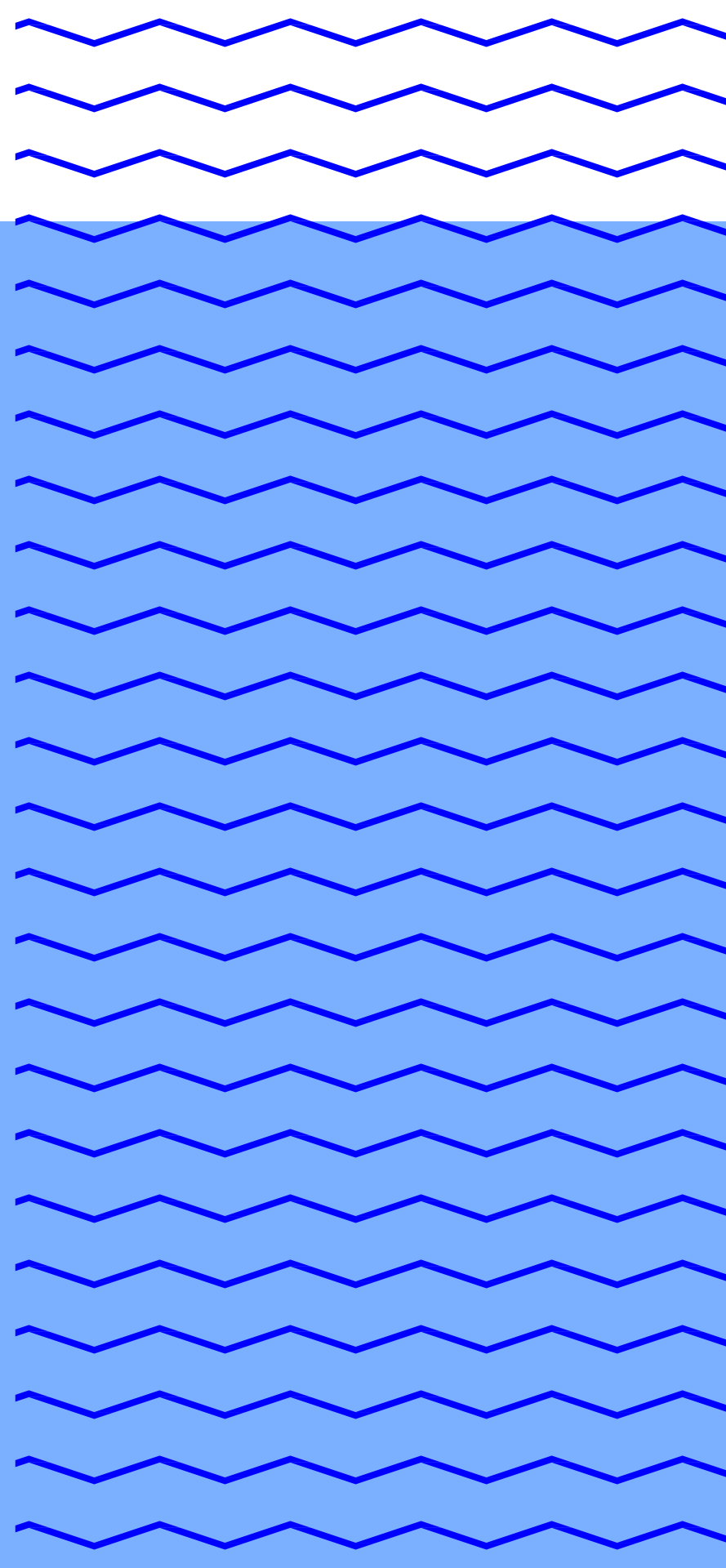
# A typology (2)



(The zeros and ones)



(The movers and shakers)



# A typology (3): worked example



DATA

(The zeros and ones)

POLITICS



STRATEGY



POLICY



PROCESS



The government and the sector have taken important steps to support international student recruitment and the HE sector

News story

**Changes to student visa route will reduce net migration**

New government restrictions to student visa routes will cut net migration while protecting the economic benefits students bring to the UK.

**Visas and Immigration**

Our expert team is here to offer information, support and guidance to help you with the visa application process and understand your visa conditions once you have received it.



PEOPLE



What's  
happened to all  
the posh kids?



# Is U now non-U?

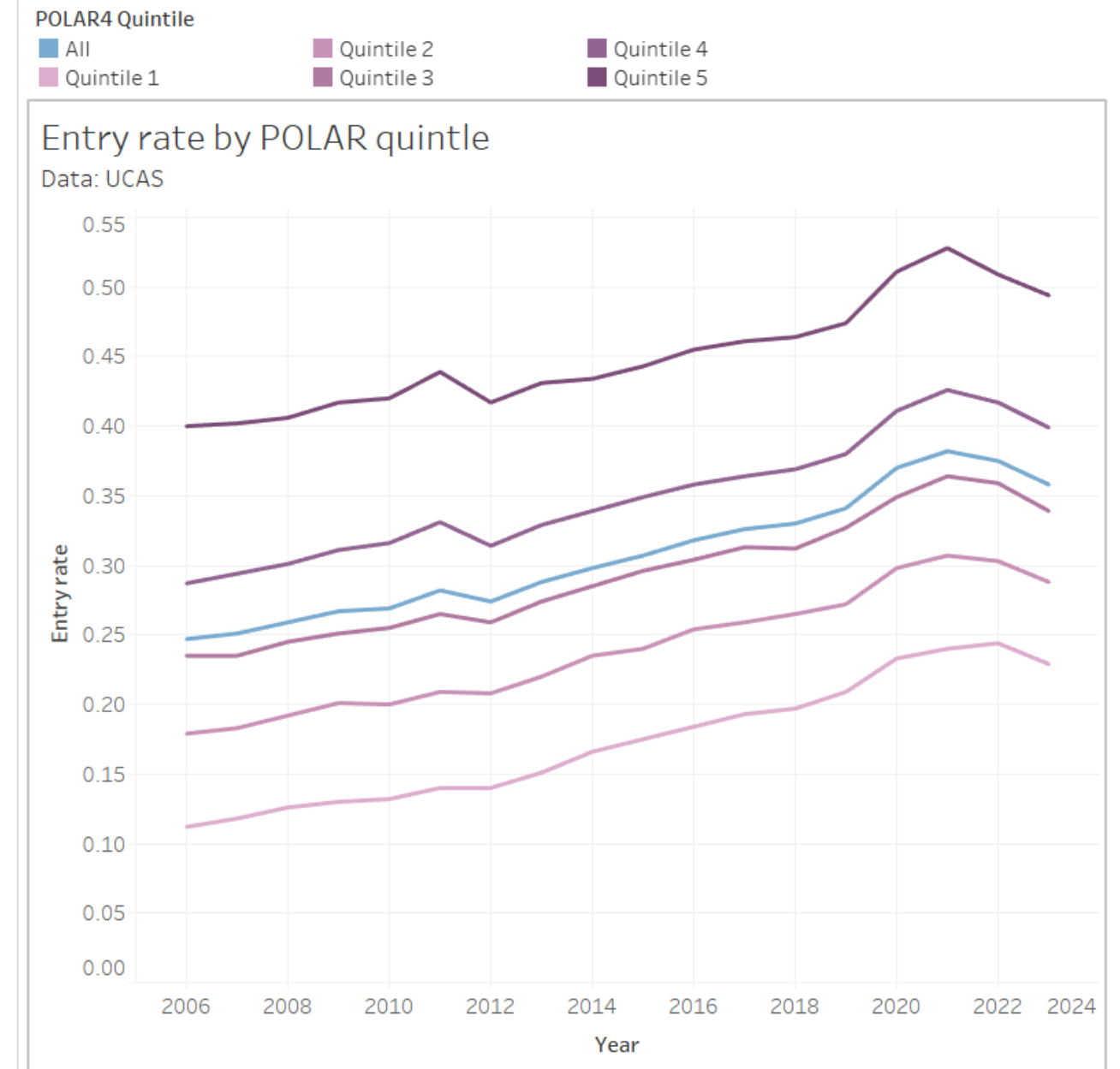
## END OF CYCLE 2023

The decline in both applications and acceptances for higher education admissions in the 2023 cycle has been widely noted. But there is a fascinating differential: the greatest proportional drops have been in the most advantaged quintile.

This runs contrary to the narrative around affordability concerns driving recruitment problems – these are students least likely to be affected by the cost of living or the falling real-terms value of student support.

So what **is** happening?

- Are students from advantaged backgrounds now more likely to seek apprenticeships or vocational training than university entry?
- Has the availability of places at more selective providers for home UG students had an impact on aspirations?
- Has negative coverage of the sector in right-of-centre media have an impact?
- Is there a Covid or Covid-related effect?
- Is it linked to falling A level grades?
- Why is there no similar effect among other groups of applicants?



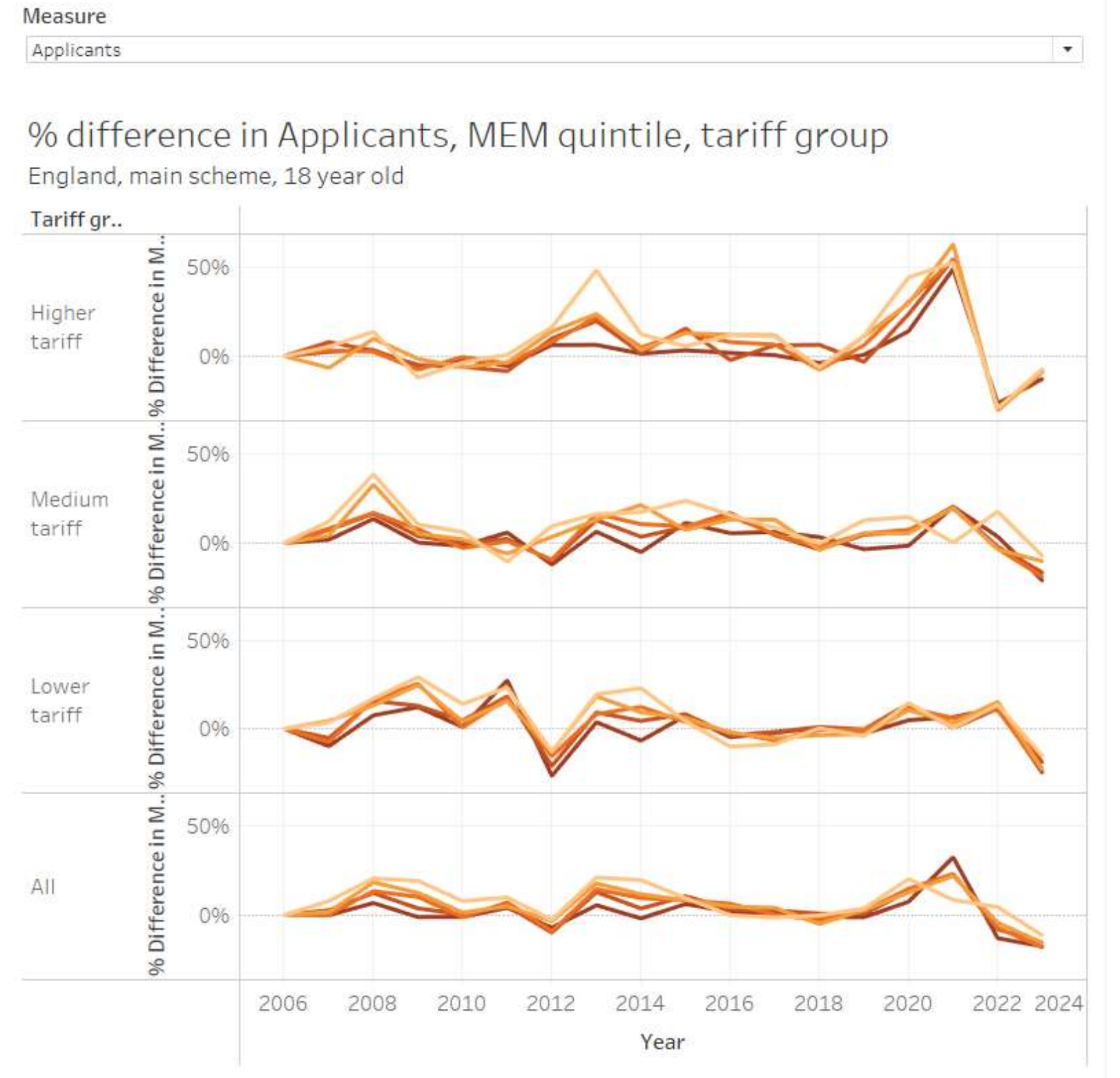


# Top tariff squeeze?

## END OF CYCLE 2023

## Has the availability of places at more selective providers for home UG students had an impact on aspirations?

Looking at % differences in application by MEM quintile and tariff group suggests not – the high providers are not shrinking as fast as others and all groups are seeing the difference. The Q5 fall-off is at medium and low tariff providers.



There will be an up-to-date section on admissions here





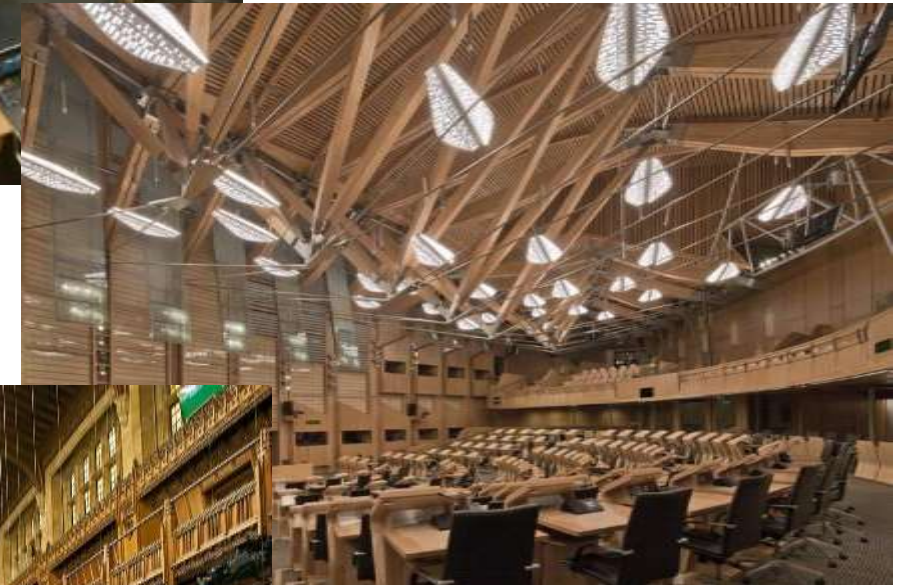
# Politics

## A USERS GUIDE

Very easy to get lost – acres of coverage, and all of it very heavily spun. If you really want to go in deep, the **Politico London Playbook** is probably the best way to keep it to a reasonable level.

Like anything involving people and personalities, it is very much an art rater than a science.

- Always wait for the strategy or policy before getting too upset
- Lots of lobbying happens between politics and strategy level
- Politicians very seldom say anything interesting or novel, but it has been known to happen
- If you much watch parliamentary debates the devolved governments and the Lords are generally much more helpful
- Don't get too attached to particular players or voices – nobody stays anywhere for long



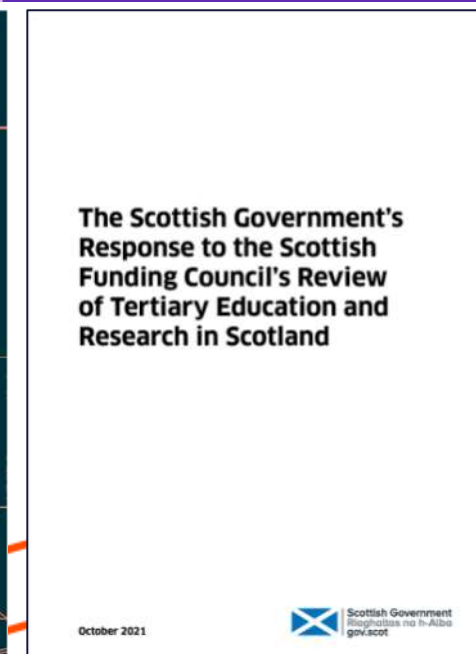
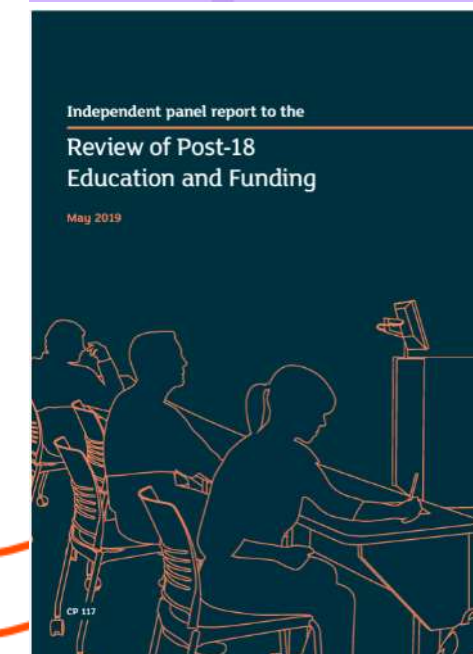
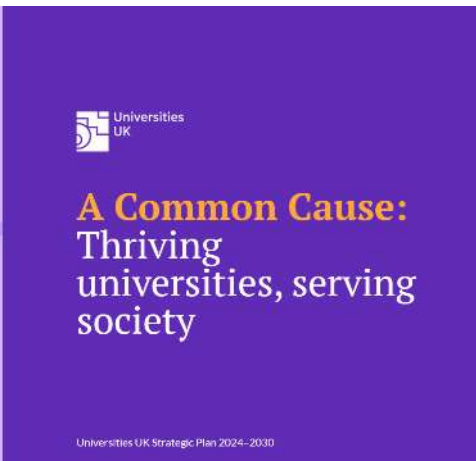
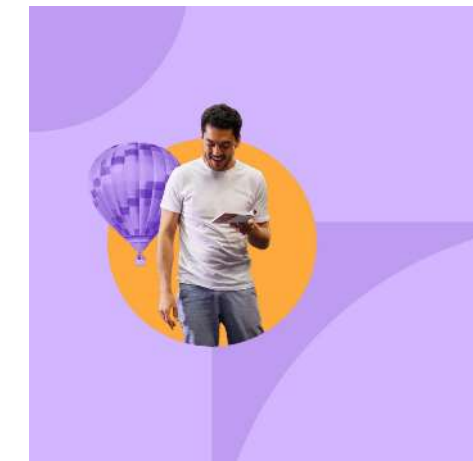
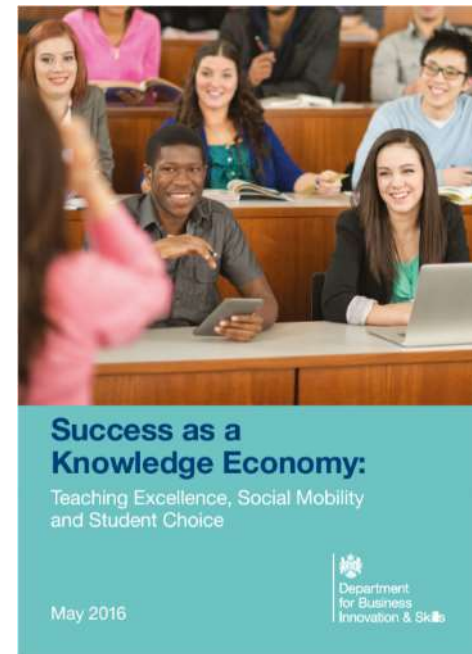


# Strategy

## A USERS GUIDE

Strategies are written in general terms and can be difficult to read. They set policy directions rather than get stuck into details of how things will work or what the outcomes will be.

- The direction of travel in a strategy is generally set in stone
- Lots of lobbying happens between strategy and policy level on implementations
- Generally strategies are written to build agreement and consensus
- You can use strategies to back up your own work where you move beyond policies



# Policy

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At the level of policy we get in to the realms of how things will work – in technical, legal, and practical terms. Policies are plans to be implemented – though these vary in the amount of detail they prescribe.

Acts of Parliament can generally be seen as policy rather than strategy.

- Policy begins the messy business of implementation. There will be changes and compromises all the way through, based on identified risks to delivery.
- Policy is really the first point you can begin to understand the likely impact of a decision.
- Lobbying around policy is at a very detailed level. One common example is amendments to a parliamentary bill
- Politics can often creep back into policy where particular interests are brought into play. Polling also has a huge impact on policy.



### Lifelong Learning (Higher Education Fee Limits) Act 2023

2023 CHAPTER 40

An Act to make provision about the determination of the fee limit for higher education courses provided by registered English higher education providers subject to a fee limit condition; and for connected purposes.

[18th September 2023]



### Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023

2023 CHAPTER 16

An Act to make provision in relation to freedom of speech and academic freedom in higher education institutions and in students' unions; and for connected purposes.

[11th May 2023]



### Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Bill

[AS PASSED]





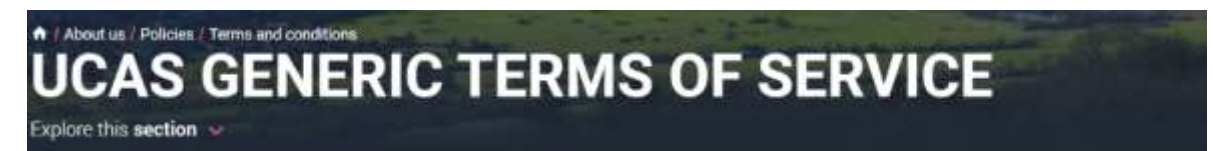
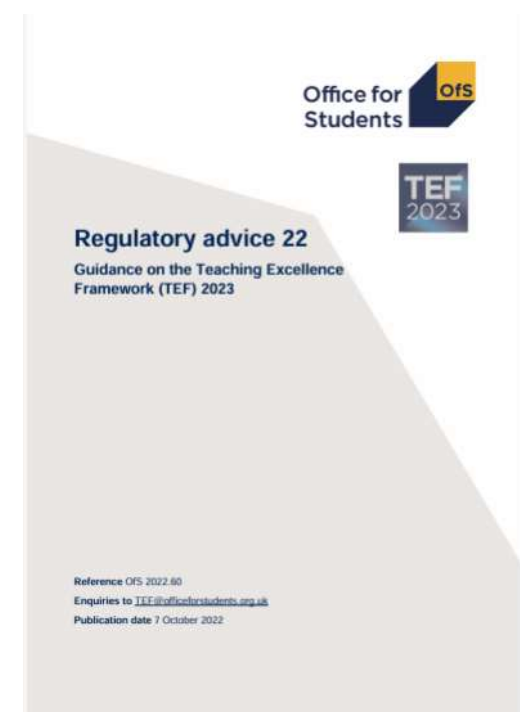
# Process

## A USERS GUIDE

Processes are set out in great detail – they are rules for expert practitioners and are not usually written for the general reader.

Processes implement policy – within the restrictions of the available resource and within the legal frameworks set out.

- Process completes implementation. It is the systems and administration experienced by the end user.
- Processes are usually documented, often in tremendous detail.
- Lobbying around process is very rare – but often links back to policy or strategy decisions.
- The design of processes is a hugely contested space. The place of politics in process design is often underestimated.



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# Data

## A USERS GUIDE

There is a tendency at all levels to treat data as an accurate and impartial depiction of the truth.

In reality, the design and collection of data is immensely political, and a lot of this aspect sails below the radar.

- Data collection is well documented, but almost entirely impenetrable
- There is a growing amount of open data about higher education – but it isn't always easy to follow it back to definitions and data processes.
- Lobbying around process is very rare – but often links back to policy or strategy decisions.
- The design of processes is a hugely contested space. The place of politics in process design is often underestimated.



### LEO Graduate outcomes provider level data

**THIS IS THE LATEST DATA**

Published: 6 July 2023  
Release type: [Official statistics](#)  
Receive updates: [Sign up for email alerts](#)

LEO Graduate Outcomes provider level data: Employment and earnings outcomes of higher education first degree graduates by provider, subject studied and graduate characteristics.

This release updates previously published figures with the latest available data (2020/21 tax year). These are official statistics. For more information on what this means, please see the "Official statistics" section at the end of this publication.

**Quick links**

- [Download all data \(XLS\)](#)
- [Browse content](#)
- [Export data](#)
- [Help and support](#)

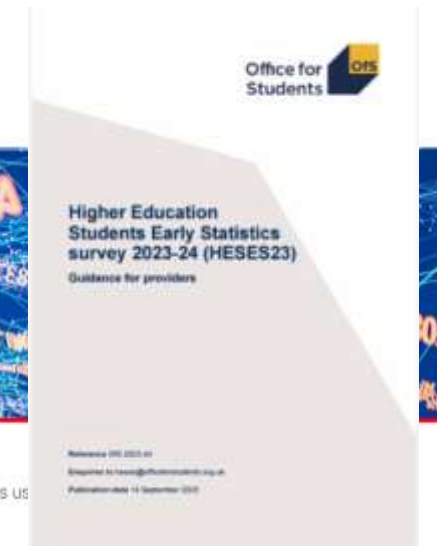
**Related information**

- [Data guidance](#)
- [Contact us](#)

**Resources in this series**

### End of cycle data resources

Evaluate the shape and size of your market segments using an angle view of the UK youth market.





# People

## A USERS GUIDE (!)

There are people – with individual preferences and ways of working, at every part of this process. Though you can't get to know every one of them you can get to know some of them – and this can help you understand what is going on.

- Politicians – their aides, staff, and party
- Civil servants and arms-length bodies
- Sector agencies
- Board members and chairs
- Students and their representative bodies
- Institutional leaders, professional services, academics
- Lobby groups and their constituencies
- The public – polling and user feedback
- Journalists, commentators, and the media

