

Manifestos 2017

a guide for English UK members

This guide to the three main party manifestos covers areas likely to be of most interest to English UK members, in particular Brexit, immigration, international students and trade, further and higher education, tourism and soft power.

It includes some pledges likely to be of interest to employers, but not all: all three manifestos have extensive sections on how business will be supported in a variety of ways and the status of self-employed not covered here.

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International students and Brexit at a glance

International students and a cap on numbers is mentioned specifically in both the Conservative and the Liberal Democrats manifesto, but not in the Labour document.

Conservatives

Snapshot: talking about a full Brexit, leaving the single market and the customs union.

Labour

Snapshot: talking about Brexit but retaining the single market and the customs union, and pledging the rights of EU nationals already here.

Liberal Democrats

Snapshot: talking about a second manifesto and opposition to leaving the EU.

The Conservative Manifesto

Slogan: The Great Meritocracy

Brexit

“As we leave the European Union, we will no longer be members of the single market or customs union but we will seek a deep and special partnership including a comprehensive free trade and customs agreement.” p35

Soft power pledges

“We will place the BBC World Service and the British Council on a secure footing so they are able to promote the best of British values around the globe and build strong ties between our local communities and other countries.” p39

Immigration and international students

“Britain is an open economy and a welcoming society and we will always ensure that our British businesses can recruit the brightest and best from around the world and Britain’s world-class universities can attract international students. We also believe that immigration should be controlled and reduced, because when immigration is too fast and too high, it is difficult to build a cohesive society.

“Thanks to Conservatives in government, there is now more control in the system. The nature of the immigration we have – more skilled workers and university students, less abuse and fewer unskilled migrants – better suits the national interest. But with annual net migration standing at 273,000, immigration to Britain is still too high. It is our objective to reduce immigration to sustainable levels, by which we mean annual net migration in the tens of thousands, rather than the hundreds of thousands we have seen over the last two decades.

“We will, therefore, continue to bear down on immigration from outside the European Union. We will increase the earnings thresholds for people wishing to sponsor migrants for family visas. We will toughen the visa requirements for students, to make sure that we maintain high standards. We will expect students to leave the country at the end of their course, unless they meet new, higher requirements that allow them to work in Britain after their studies have concluded. Overseas students will remain in the immigration statistics – in line with international definitions – and within scope of the government’s policy to reduce annual net migration.

“Leaving the European Union means, for the first time in decades, that we will be able to control immigration from the European Union too. We will therefore establish an immigration policy that allows us to reduce and control the number of people who come to Britain from the European Union, while still allowing us to attract the skilled workers our economy needs.” p55-56

“We will increase the Immigration Health Surcharge, to £600 for migrant workers and £450 for international students, to cover their use of the NHS.” p67

International trade

“We will create a network of Her Majesty’s Trade Commissioners to head nine new regional overseas posts. These commissioners will lead export promotion, investment and trade policy overseas. We will reconvene the Board of Trade with a membership specifically charged with ensuring that we increase exports from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland as well as England, and that trade policy is directly influenced by every part of our United Kingdom.

“We will work to forge a new culture of exporting among UK businesses, equipping them with the tools and opportunities they need to succeed in the global marketplace, and take advantage of new high-growth markets around the world.

“We will take a more active role in supporting British consortia to win the largest and most innovative contracts around the world. We will ensure that small and medium- sized businesses are able to identify the right markets and sectors to win vital contracts abroad. We will put UK Export Finance, which ensures that no viable UK export fails for lack of finance or insurance, at the heart of the UK’s trade promotion proposition. And we will encourage the world to visit, study and do business in the UK through the GREAT Britain campaign and Visit Britain.” p15

Business regulation

“A new Conservative government will continue to increase the National Living Wage to 60 per cent of median earnings by 2020 and then by the rate of median earnings, so that people who are on the lowest pay benefit from the same improvements in earnings as higher paid workers.” p16

Universities – investment

“We will work to build up the investment funds of our universities across the UK. We want larger, aggregated funds to increase significantly the amounts invested in and by universities. We want universities to enjoy the commercial fruits of their research, through funds that are large enough to list, thereby giving British investors a chance to share in their success.” p20

FE Colleges

“We will invest in further education colleges to make sure they have world-class equipment and facilities and will create a new national programme to attract experienced industry professionals to work in FE colleges.”

“To ensure that further, technical and higher education institutions are treated fairly, we will also launch a major review of funding across tertiary education as a whole, looking at how we can ensure that students get access to financial support that offers value for money, is available across different routes and encourages the development of the skills we need as a country.” p52-53

Visas for workers

“We will therefore ask the independent Migration Advisory Committee to make recommendations to the government about how the visa system can become better aligned with our modern industrial strategy. We envisage that the committee’s advice will allow us to set aside significant numbers of visas for workers in strategically-important sectors, such as digital technology, without adding to net migration as a whole. “

“...we will double the Immigration Skills Charge levied on companies employing migrant workers, to £2,000 a year by the end of the parliament, using the revenue generated to invest in higher level skills training for workers in the UK. p20

Tourism

“Our towns and cities excel when they have vibrant cultural life. Britain’s arts and culture are world-beating and are at the heart of the regeneration of much of modern Britain. We will continue our strong support for the arts, and ensure more of that support is based outside London. We will maintain free entry to the permanent collections of our major national museums and galleries. We will introduce a new cultural development fund to use cultural investment to turn around communities. We will hold a Great Exhibition of the North in 2018, to celebrate amazing achievements in innovation, the arts and engineering. We will support a UK city in making a bid to host the 2022 Commonwealth Games. And in this 70th Anniversary Year of the Edinburgh Festival we will support the development of the new Edinburgh Concert Hall, reaffirming Edinburgh as the UK’s leading festival city and a cultural beacon around the globe.” p26

Possible opportunities for ELT

“We will bring forward a new integration strategy, which will seek to help people in more isolated communities to engage with the wider world, help women in particular into the workplace, and teach more people to speak English. p55

- [View the full Conservative manifesto](#)

The Labour Manifesto

Slogan: For the many, not the few

Brexit

“We will prioritise jobs and living standards, build a close new relationship with the EU, protect workers’ rights and environmental standards, provide certainty

to EU nationals and give a meaningful role to Parliament throughout negotiations.

“We will end Theresa May’s reckless approach to Brexit, and seek to unite the country around a Brexit deal that works for every community in Britain.

We will scrap the Conservatives’ Brexit White Paper and replace it with fresh negotiating priorities that have a strong emphasis on retaining the benefits of the Single market and the Customs Union – which are essential for maintaining industries, jobs and businesses in Britain. Labour will always put jobs and the economy first.

“A Labour government will immediately guarantee existing rights for all EU nationals living in Britain and secure reciprocal rights for UK citizens who have chosen to make their lives in EU countries.” P24

“We will seek to ensure that Britain remains part of the Erasmus scheme so that British students have the same educational opportunities after we leave the EU.” p25

International students

“Labour welcomes international students who benefit and strengthen our education sector, generating more than £25 billion for the British economy and significantly boosting regional jobs and local businesses. They are not permanent residents and we will not include them in immigration numbers, but we will crack down on fake colleges.” p29

Export markets

“Labour will champion the export interests of SMEs, ensuring all new trade agreements include a commitment to support their market access needs. We will develop an export incentive scheme for SMEs based on international best practice, and we will ring-fence Tradeshow Access Programme grants to help SMEs reach new customers around the world.

“Labour will use the full range of export credit, finance, insurance and trade promotion tools to boost British exports and support priority industrial sectors.

We will create a network of regional trade and investment champions to promote the export and investment interests of businesses across the country, and we will include regional representation on overseas trade missions.” p31

FE

“To implement the Sainsbury recommendations, we would correct historic neglect of the FE sector by giving the sector the investment – in teachers and facilities – it deserves to become a world-leading provider of adult and vocational education.

[make] FE courses free at the point of use, including English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses.” p40

Universities

“University tuition is free in many northern European countries, and under a Labour government it will be free here too.” p41

“We will seek to ensure that Britain remains part of the Erasmus scheme so that British students have the same educational opportunities after we leave the EU.” p25

Prevent

“Labour will review the Prevent programme with a view to assessing both its effectiveness and its potential to alienate minority communities.

In doing so, we will address the government’s failure to take any effective new measures against a growing problem of extreme or violent radicalisation.” p77

Immigration

“Labour will recruit 500 more border guards to add to our safeguards and controls.” P78

Tourism

“Labour will support tourism at the heart of government. The tourism industry represents 9.6 per cent of UK employment, 4.9 per cent of export and 9 per cent of GDP, but its importance is too often forgotten. Labour will ensure that tourism becomes a national priority again. We will reinstate the cross-Whitehall ministerial group on tourism, and ensure that government ministers across departments understand how their roles fit into the national tourism agenda.” p89

“Labour will maintain free entry to museums and invest in our museums and heritage sector.” p95

- [View the full labour manifesto](#)

Liberal Democrat Manifesto

Slogan: "Change Britain's Future"

Note: The Liberal Democrats are asking to become the main opposition rather than the new government "I am asking you to give me your support to make the Liberal Democrats the official opposition to Theresa May's Conservative government."

Brexit

"...when the terms of our future relationship with the EU have been negotiated (over the next two years on the Government's timetable), we will put that deal to a vote of the British people in a referendum, with the alternative option of staying in the EU on the ballot paper. We continue to believe that there is no deal as good for the UK outside the EU as the one it already has as a member."

"Every vote for the Liberal Democrats in this election is a vote to give the final say to the British people."

"Liberal Democrats will fight to prevent a hard Brexit."

We will press for the UK to unilaterally guarantee the rights of EU nationals in the UK, ending their ongoing uncertainty. We will call for the overhaul and simplification of the registration process and the requirements for EU nationals to obtain permanent residence and UK citizenship, as the current system is not fit for purpose. We will urge the government, and use our influence with Liberal leaders in European countries, to secure the same rights for UK citizens living in European Union countries." p10

"We believe that any deal negotiated for the UK outside the EU must ensure that trade can continue without customs controls at the border, and must maintain membership of the single market, which smooths trade between the UK and the continent by providing a common 'rule book' for businesses and a common mechanism to ensure that everyone abides by the rules." p10

"We support the principle of freedom of movement – to abandon it would threaten Britain's prosperity and reputation as an open, tolerant society. Any deal negotiated for the UK outside the EU must protect the right to work, travel, study and retire across the EU. Any restrictions sought by the government must take account of the vital importance of EU workers to the British economy, including public services."

"In an increasingly globalised and complex world, it is vital that our young people are afforded the same opportunities their parents enjoyed to work, study and travel abroad. To that end we will do everything we can to protect Erasmus+ and other EU-funded schemes which increase opportunities for young people."

"Britain is an outward-looking country with commercial and leisure interests around the world, particularly in Europe. We will strive to retain traveller and tourist benefits such as the European Health Insurance Card, reduced roaming charges and pet passports, all of which are at risk by leaving the European Union." (All pp 9-10)

FE colleges, universities

“We will...Reverse all cuts to front-line school and college budgets, protecting per-pupil funding in real terms.” p25

“...Establish a review of higher education governance in the next parliament to consider any necessary reforms, in the light of the latest evidence of the impact of the existing financing system on access, participation and quality, and make sure there is no more retrospective raising of rates, or selling-off of loans to private companies.”

“Reverse the damage to universities and academics by changing the country’s course away from a hard Brexit.

“Recognise the value of international staff to universities and promote international collaboration.

“Fight to retain access to Horizon 2020 and Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions funding.
“Reinstate quality assurance for universities applying for degree-awarding powers.”

“Develop national colleges as national centres of expertise for key sectors, such as renewable energy, to deliver the high-level vocational skills that businesses need.”

“Facilitate across the UK an effective and comprehensive system for credit transfer and recognition of prior learning and qualifications.” p30-32

“End the 1% cap on pay rises in the public sector and uprate wages in line with inflation.” p37

Immigration

“[In the next Parliament, we will be] Making the positive case for immigration.” p70

“The immigration and asylum systems have suffered from inefficiency and severe backlogs and delays over many years, harming their credibility and ability to operate effectively. We recognise that large-scale immigration has placed strains on some local communities and services. Major improvements are urgently needed. For that reason, when it comes to immigration the Liberal Democrats will:

- Ensure that the immigration system is operated fairly and efficiently, with strict control of borders, including entry and exit checks, and adequately funded Border Force policing of entry by irregular routes.
- Hold an annual debate in parliament on skill and labour market shortfalls and surpluses to identify the migration necessary to meet the UK’s needs.
- Continue to allow high-skilled immigration to support key sectors of our economy, and ensure work, tourist and family visas are processed quickly and efficiently.
- Recognising their largely temporary status, remove students from the official migration statistics.
- Ensure the UK is an attractive destination for overseas students. We will reinstate post-study work visas for graduates in STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) subjects who find suitable employment within six months of graduating. Give the devolved administrations the right to sponsor additional post-study work visas.”
- Work with universities to ensure a fair and transparent student visa process and ways to measure accurately the number of students leaving at the end of their course.
- Provide additional government funding for English as an additional language classes to help migrants and residents gain independence and integrate with their local communities.

Prevent

“Scrap the flawed Prevent strategy and replace it with a scheme that prioritises community engagement and supports communities in developing their own approach to tackling the dangers of violent extremism.” p76

Tourism

“Maintain free access to national museums and galleries.” p65

Soft power

“Maintain funding for the BBC World Service, BBC Monitoring and the British Council.” p86

- [View the full Liberal Democrat Manifesto](#)