

Be Connected Higher education - Winter 2024

07 February 2024  Bettina Rigg

Welcome to Be Connected, our quarterly update for higher education institutions.

We aim to provide content that offers you real value together with relevant, useful information from our national team of legal and HR experts.

Be Connected is your space. Please help us to help you by providing your feedback and letting us know what you would like to see featured in future editions.

Sector developments

The independent review of university spinout companies

The independent review of university spinout companies made 11 recommendations to accelerate and unlock the potential of UK university spinouts with the aim of enhancing the economic and societal impact of university stimulated innovation.

The UK government has accepted all of the independent review recommendations and are now, alongside other stakeholders, working on proposals to support their implementation.

In this article we look at the funding available to universities, consider opportunities to capitalise on this development and look at the support that is available for commercialising your Intellectual property.

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Legislation

The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act

The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 (LURA) has received Royal Assent and, according to the government, will speed up the planning system, hold developers to account, cut bureaucracy and encourage more councils to put in place plans enabling the building of new homes.

So far, very few of the key provisions have actually come into force and a number of these will be subject to further regulations which will provide the detail.

In this article we provide a brief summary of some of the new ideas included in the Levelling up and Regeneration Act 2023 that may come forward at a later date, and possible next steps we can expect to see.

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Procurement Act: the even lighter touch regime

When the government first introduced its proposals for reform of the procurement regime in its green paper, Transforming Public Procurement in 2020 (the Green Paper), it made it clear that it would not continue with a separate Light Touch Regime, which had first been introduced in the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

The response to the Green Paper, however, convinced the government to retain a Light Touch regime but with improvements to its scope and application. Find out what this means for you in the latest briefing in our '[Ready for reform](#)' series.

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Do your campus buildings comply with the latest legislation?

There are a range of building codes and safety standards with which university buildings need to comply and failure to do so can pose a risk to your students, staff and the general public.

If you're developing your campus estate then you'll need to comply with the latest building safety legislation, which is borne out of the Grenfell enquiry and introduced by the Building Safety Act 2022. In this article we advise you on the questions to ask and the roles and responsibilities to allocate to help you to ensure you're compliant.

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The road to automated vehicles - Automated Vehicles Bill update

The Automated Vehicles Bill completed its second reading in the House of Lords on 28 November 2023. We summarise the key takeaways from the discussion covering the transition period, job losses and opportunities, data implications and considerations for insurance and liability.

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Sustainability

COP28 – Key outcomes agreed and what they mean for you

The United Nations (UN) climate meeting, COP28, took place in Dubai from 30 November until 12 December 2023. After days of negotiations calling on all countries to move away from the use of fossil fuels, COP28 ended in applause as a deal was announced by President Sultan al-Jaber.

Listen as our legal experts share their reactions to the discussions held at COP28, covering topics of renewables and building development, nature and government and green sustainable finance and how the decisions made could impact your organisation.

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Climate change - what action should we take?

During COP28 the UK Prime Minister called for an "era of action" to tackle climate change globally. The United Nations called the 2020s the "decade of action" and has set key objectives (such as cutting carbon emissions in half) to be achieved by 2030. However, it's often difficult to know what individuals and businesses can do to play their part.

In this article we consider the actions that organisations can take, we share our own experience and consider future developments such as a more rigorous regulatory regime.

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Installing EV charge points on campus

Numbers of electric vehicles (EVs) are increasing and the availability of charge points needs improvement. There are enroute charging stations, charge points installed at people's homes and increasingly, charge points at places of work and other destination parking spots.

Car parks at university campuses need them but decision makers often feel somewhat in the dark as to how to go about getting the systems installed and maintained.

If you're thinking about getting your campus ready for EVs, here are some of the legal nuts and bolts of what you'll need to do and when.

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Guidance

Data protection in higher education: what to expect in 2024

As we step into the intricate landscape of UK data protection in 2024, there will be opportunities and challenges for the higher education sector. With growing reliance on technology and an increasing volume of personal data being generated, this remains an exciting and important area.

This is particularly the case when it comes to new technologies and the interplay between regulatory development, the increasing popularity of AI and evolving expectations of individuals. It is marked by heightened concerns about privacy and cybersecurity.

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Streamlined routes for subsidies

Universities in the UK undertake many activities which can engage the UK's subsidy control regime under the Subsidy Control Act 2022. This includes activity carried out by universities involving collaborative arrangements with businesses for research activities.

The Act contains 'streamlined routes' which can be particularly helpful in this context of research projects. In this guidance we explain the options available to you.

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