

The Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson MP
Secretary of State for Education
Department for Education, Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
SW1P 3BT

09 July 2026

Sent by email

Dear Secretary of State,

We are writing to express our serious concern regarding the decision to reduce funding for medical and dental academics through cuts of £16.7 million to the Strategic Priorities Grant funding, as set out in your recent guidance to the Office for Students on funding allocations for 2026–27.¹ This is made up of £15.8 million to consultant clinical academic pay and £0.9 million to senior academic general practitioners pay. Such cuts would have a profound impact on an already fragile sector.

This funding supports pay parity between medical and dental academics and their NHS counterparts – a long-standing commitment that is vital to attracting doctors and dentists into medical education and research. Reducing investment in this workforce will weaken the UK's capacity for research, innovation and medical education, ultimately affecting patient care, NHS resilience and economic growth.

Medical and dental academics occupy a unique role across the health and education sectors. They are the clinicians leading the development of new diagnostics, treatments and models of care through world-leading research, responsible for up to a third of university grant income, while simultaneously educating and training the next generation of healthcare professionals. Reducing investment in this workforce will have consequences not only for research and innovation, but also for medical education, patient care, the long-term resilience of the NHS and the health of the UK economy.

The Medical Schools Council 2025 staffing census reported that clinical academics now account for just 3.2% of the consultant workforce and the number of clinical academics under the age of 36 fell by 25% over a single year, highlighting the unchecked decline of this vital part of the profession. These cuts will only exacerbate the problem.

The cuts also pose a threat to the sustainability of the dental academic workforce. Since 2024, the number of clinical teachers has reduced by 25%, professors by 17.6%, and lecturers by 13.3%. This reduced workforce is now expected to train an additional 50 dentists per year. The divide between the Government's ambitions for dental education and its investment in the

¹ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/pf3lno1z/guide-to-funding-2025-26-august-2025-update.pdf>

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workforce necessary to deliver them is striking. If this downward trajectory is allowed to continue, our dental academics will simply not have the capacity to meet the demand placed on them.

These cuts are fundamentally at odds with the Government's stated priorities. Ministers have rightly emphasised the importance of life sciences, research and innovation to economic growth, improved patient outcomes and NHS transformation. The Science and Technology Framework similarly recognises that attracting, developing and retaining talented researchers is central to maintaining the UK's global leadership in science and technology. Reducing investment in the very workforce that delivers these ambitions sends a contradictory message and illustrates the need for greater coordination between health, education and science policy.

We urge you to reconsider and work across departments to develop a long-term, sustainable approach to supporting medical and dental academics, including appropriate mechanisms for pay-setting and funding to ensure pay parity with NHS counterparts. A coordinated approach across health, education and research policy is essential to safeguarding the future workforce and ensuring the UK can continue to deliver the research, innovation and economic growth that the Government has rightly identified as national priorities.

Given the cross-cutting nature of this issue, we have copied this letter to ministers across the relevant departments and encourage a coordinated response. It is now essential that the Government's forthcoming NHS Workforce Plan sets out a credible approach to addressing these areas. Without a commitment to cross-departmental working to urgently address these issues, these cuts risk further destabilising the UK's ability to remain a leader in research and education.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these issues urgently and to work with you to develop a sustainable approach that reflects the strategic importance of medical and dental academics.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Jonathan Gibb
Co-Chair, BMA Medical Academic Staff
Committee



Professor David Strain
Co-Chair, BMA Medical Academic Staff
Committee



Petros Mylonas
Chair, BDA Dental Academic Staff Committee



Swati Nehete
Vice Chair, BDA Dental Academic Staff
Committee

CC: Karin Smyth MP, Minister of State for Health (Secondary Care);
Lord Vallance, Minister of State (Minister for Science, Innovation, Research and Nuclear)