



Professor Georgina Harris FIMechE, FRAeS, MIET, MInstP, AMICE, FIMA, FRAS, FHEA, President

The Rt Hon Andy Burnham MP

Prime Minister

14 August 2026

Dear Prime Minister,

Congratulations on becoming leader of the Labour Party and Prime Minister.

The Engineering Professors' Council welcome's your Government's ambitions to deliver economic growth and establish the UK as a global leader in science and technology. These are ambitions we share as the national representative body for engineering academics.

Every major national priority, from clean energy and advanced manufacturing to transport, defence, digital technologies and healthcare innovation, relies upon a strong and sustainable engineering ecosystem. Universities play a central role in that ecosystem through educating engineers, advancing knowledge, collaborating with industry, and providing the facilities and expertise that enable innovation.

At a time when government rightly seeks to expand the nation's capacity in areas such as artificial intelligence, semiconductors, advanced materials, energy systems, defence technologies and critical infrastructure, many engineering departments are facing significant financial pressures. Engineering education requires laboratories, workshops, specialist equipment, technical staff and industry-standard facilities. Engineering research depends on long-term investment in people, infrastructure and partnerships.

We are increasingly concerned that the cumulative pressures facing higher education and research risk undermining engineering capabilities that are essential to the nation's future success.

Across the sector, difficult decisions are being taken that may reduce capacity in strategically important areas of teaching and research. The loss of capability in these areas cannot be quickly or easily reversed. A reduction in engineering capability today means fewer engineers entering the workforce tomorrow, diminished capacity for industrial innovation, and a weaker foundation for future productivity growth. It risks increasing the gap between the skills the economy requires and those it is able to develop domestically.

We therefore urge the Government to adopt a long-term approach that recognises engineering education and research as strategic national assets.



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Specifically, we call on Government to:

1. Establish sustainable funding for high-cost engineering education

The current funding model does not adequately reflect the true cost of delivering university engineering programmes. We urge Government to work with the sector to ensure that students continue to have access to world-class engineering education and that institutions can maintain the facilities and expertise required to deliver it.

2. Provide stability and predictability in research investment

World-leading engineering research depends upon confidence, continuity and long-term planning. Funding uncertainty can have lasting consequences for research capability, international partnerships and talent retention. Stable investment is essential if the UK is to remain internationally competitive.

3. Develop a coherent national engineering skills strategy

The UK's engineering workforce challenges cannot be addressed by higher education alone. Progress requires a coordinated approach spanning schools, colleges, apprenticeships, universities, doctoral training and professional development. We encourage Government to develop a joined-up strategy that reflects the scale and urgency of the challenge.

4. Strengthen support for university-industry collaboration

Engineering departments are critical partners for businesses of all sizes. They provide skilled graduates, conduct collaborative research, support innovation and help attract investment into local and regional economies. Policies that strengthen these partnerships will support both growth and productivity.

5. Recognise engineering capability as a matter of national resilience

The skills, facilities and expertise embedded within UK engineering faculties contribute directly to energy security, technological sovereignty, defence capability and infrastructure resilience. They should be viewed as part of the nation's strategic capacity.

Prime Minister, engineering has long been one of the UK's greatest strengths. Our universities educate the people who design, build and maintain the systems upon which modern society depends. They generate the discoveries that become new technologies, new businesses and new industries. They support employers across every region and nation of the UK.

The UK's engineering academic community stands ready to help deliver the Government's missions. But success will require a partnership built on long-term thinking and a shared commitment to sustaining the capabilities on which those missions depend.



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The decisions taken today will shape the engineering workforce, research base and industrial capacity of the 2030s and beyond.

We urge you to ensure that engineering remains at the heart of the UK's plans for growth, prosperity, security and resilience.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Georgina Harris".

Professor Georgina Harris

President

Engineering Professors' Council

The Engineering Professors' Council (EPC) is the representative body for engineering academics in higher education. We provide a forum within which engineers working in UK higher education can exchange ideas about engineering education, research and other matters of common interest and to come together to provide an influential voice and authoritative conduit through which engineering departments' interests can be represented to key audiences.