

AGAINST EDUCATION CUTS POLICY

Title:	Against Education Cuts	Date of Group Chat:	April 2019
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Union Notes:

1. Since 2012, the maximum amount a UK university can charge for an undergraduate degree has more than tripled, from £3000 to £9250, and the vast majority of universities charge this amount. [1]
2. Alongside this, since 2016 we have seen the removal of bursaries and fee waivers for allied health courses, including but not limited to nursing and midwifery.
3. The government has also removed maintenance grants for students from low-income backgrounds since 2016. [1]
4. Costs for postgraduate courses vary wildly, from less than the cost of an undergraduate degree [2] to more than £50,000 per year, dependent on course and institution. [3]
5. According to recent NUS research, working class students are more affected by the idea of debt, and it affects their decisions of where and what to study. [4]
6. In addition, the poorest students are likely to graduate with the most debt; the very fact that they have less money to begin with means they become eligible for additional maintenance loans – which means more debt.
7. Working class students are more likely to work above the recommended 15 hours per week in order to afford to attend university. [4]
8. Student halls often exceed the maintenance loans available to students; every housing option (except for twin rooms, where you share with another student) in Cambridge and Chelmsford exceeds the minimum loan available.
9. Recent leaks from the ongoing review of post-18 funding suggest that there may be differential fees in the future (ie science and medical courses charging up to £13,500 per year for an undergraduate degree, and arts courses charging £6500)
10. Other leaks include, for instance, the idea of a 'grad levy' whereby companies would pay a university directly for every one of their graduates they employ.

[1] <https://www.gov.uk/student-finance/continuing-fulltime-students>

[2] <https://www.anglia.ac.uk/study/postgraduate/animal-behaviour-applications-for-conservation>

[3] <https://www.sbs.ox.ac.uk/programmes/oxford-mba>

[4] <https://www.nusconnect.org.uk/resources/class-dismissed-getting-in-and-getting-on-in-further-and-higher-education-report-of-the-nus-poverty-commission-executive-summary>

Union Believes:

1. The current 'market' for education is unsustainable.
2. That education is a right and not a privilege, and as such all students should be able to access education freely, including to masters and doctorate level.
3. The fact that the poorest students graduate with the most debt is unfair and unjust.
4. The fact that postgraduate degrees vary wildly in price creates a class system, where only the wealthy are able to attain a "good" education, and that this is unfair.
5. That differential fees are likely to turn working class students away from science and medicine, given that they are more debt-averse.
6. That the current student financing system is not fit for purpose.
7. That all students should be given adequate finance to support not only their tuition but also their living costs.
8. That all students, including international students, have a right to a 'fixed-fee' for their degree; the university should not be raising tuition partway through a course.
9. 'Grad levies' are not suitable; research shows that disabled people have to apply for more jobs before they get one, [1] and that BME people are less likely to be in employment after graduating than white students. [2] Grad levies would thus provide universities with a perverse incentive to not educate people who are less likely to get a job, regardless of their academic ability, due to societal discrimination.

[1] https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/disabled-people-jobs-applications-more-able-bodied-stats-before-employment-a7970701.html?utm_source=reddit.com

[2] <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2016/jan/30/ethnic-minority-graduates-earn-less-struggle-to-build-careers>

Union Resolves:

1. To resist any attempts to raise tuition fees any further.
2. To resist the university raising tuition fees mid-degree.
3. To resist any attempts to change the student financing system in a way that disadvantages students.
4. To continue to fight for better living costs for students.
5. To continue to lobby for better funding for our students in the allied health professions.
6. To lobby, as and when appropriate, for free education, and to resist cuts to the HE sector.
7. To hold a stance that education is a public good and as such should be paid for by the government and free to students.
8. To hold a stance that differential fees are not to be encouraged.
9. To hold a stance that grad levies are not a suitable way to fund the education system.

Policy Summary:

This policy outlines what the Union believes about how education should be funded - it should be free and freely accessible to all people, and the Union will resist any changes to the funding system that disadvantage students

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