

Top-Up Fees

Proposed by: Ben Harris, ICU Deputy President (Education and Welfare)

Seconded by: John Collins, ICU President

The Union Notes:

1. That October 2006 heralded the introduction of top-up fees of up to £3000 in the UK.
2. That all courses at Imperial College are currently charged at the maximum rate of £3000.
3. That since fees were introduced in 1998, students have faced increased financial pressures, with many more taking up part time work.
4. That the average student debt in 2006 was £14, 779. (DfES)
5. That top-up fees combined with the student loan will leave some Imperial students facing a debt of up to £44, 000 on graduation.
6. That the cap of £3000 pounds will remain in line with inflation until 2010.
7. That the government has pledged to review the £3000 cap in the 2009-2010.
8. That the Russell Group, of which Imperial College is a member, has already begun to make the case for unregulated fees, calling the rise "inevitable".
9. That Sir Richard Sykes, Rector of Imperial College, is in favour of unlimited fees and has indicated that he considers charging students £15,000 per year reasonable.

The Union Believes:

1. That Higher Education benefits not only the individual but society as a whole.
2. That access to Higher Education should be based solely on academic standing and not on the ability to pay.
3. That top-up fees have created a market in Higher Education which hinders the involvement of those students who come from backgrounds with historically low participation rates.
4. That marketisation has created a divide between Universities leading students choosing courses based not on their suitability, but the cost of studying.
5. That marketisation will dissuade poorer students from applying to elite institutions such as Imperial College.
6. That the level of debt currently incurred by undergraduates is liable to affect their future career choices; specifically in careers such as academia and teaching which offer lower salaries than positions in industry and the City.
7. That unregulated top-up fees will only exacerbate these problems.

The Union Further Believes:

1. That any “review” by the Government is likely to be a sham, designed to smooth the passage of unrestricted top-up fees

The Union Resolves:

1. To actively campaign against any attempt to lift the cap on top-up fees, including, but not limited to:
 - a. Supporting the NUS “Admission: Impossible” campaign, including the forthcoming national demonstration.
 - b. To work with The Aldwych Group, and other external organisations, in lobbying the Russell Group and other relevant HE bodies.
 - c. To mandate the DPEW/President to write to relevant Government ministers, shadow ministers and local MPs setting out our position and attaching the policy.
 - d. To support initiatives aimed at establishing a credible alternative funding model for Higher Education in the UK

The Union Further Resolves:

1. To continue campaigning on the long term goal of free access to higher education for all.
2. To revoke all previous Union policy on HE funding.