

No to the Marketisation of Education (Free Education for all)

This Union notes:

1. Fees affect all students.
2. That the vote, in parliament, on top-up fees was only in favour of fees by 5 votes.
3. Fees for Home/EU students are capped at £3070 (rising with inflation year on year).
4. Fees for international students are completely uncapped by government.
5. The government is planning to review the cap on Home/EU fees in 2009.
6. As stated in the corporate plan UEA has already started budgeting for the cap to increase.
7. Our local MPs, Charles Clarke and Ian Gibson, were largely responsible for leading the "for" and "against" fees groups in parliament.
8. Chief among the arguments in support of the new system was that it would widen access to education; estimates vary but broadly show this has not happened.
9. The NUS just passed, with the support of Labour Students, policy which ends its opposition to fees in general replacing it with a campaign to "Keep the Cap".

This Union believes:

1. "Keep the Cap" is a weak slogan which fails to express our belief in free education.
2. That the new NUS policy and any attempts to campaign to "Keep the Cap" – are short sighted and concede the powerful moral case for free education for all.
3. Higher Education should be treated as a right not a privilege.
4. Access to education should be equal (and free) for all people, regardless of any artificial/irrelevant distinctions between them, e.g. class, place of birth, race, gender, sexual orientation etc.
5. On a pragmatic level, a campaign to "Keep the Cap" won't be successful. A campaign for completely free education for all may not be entirely successful but will re-orientate the debate in the right direction.
6. Where public money is needed to fund HE it should be raised through general taxation, not fees on students.
7. Variation in fees, on any basis, is unacceptable and goes against the principles of equal opportunities.

8. Education has many positive side effects and should be seen as a good in its self. Campaigning for free access to education should be led by our belief in education for its own sake.
9. Government attempts to justify HE in terms of social mobility, economic benefit or creating "good citizens" are sometimes true but miss the important point of education (see UB 8).
10. Political stitch-ups at NUS conference – a reified, politically distorted, unrepresentative arena - coordinated by Labour Students, should not be allowed to be seen as the voice of all students.

This Union resolves:

1. UUEAS should fight to restore a strong campaigning national student voice for free education through NUS.
2. In addition, while NUS is failing to do this, UUEAS should independently campaign on a local and national level for fully free education for all – working with other students' unions that hold similar beliefs.
3. Every available opportunity should be taken by the Executive to speak for free education, lobby politicians & HE sector leaders and press release to local, student and national media.
4. That while this should not become the only campaign the Union works on it should be considered a top priority.
5. Where feasible, to fund UEA students to attend any protests, meetings, rallies etc that the Executive deem to be where the fight for free education is being fought.
6. To submit the following Motion to NUS (appendix)

Appendix:

No to the Marketisation of Education (Free Education for all)

Conference Believes:

1. Fees affect all students.
2. Fees for international students are completely uncapped by government.
3. Many institutions have already started budgeting for the cap to increase.
4. Chief among the arguments in support of the new system was that it would widen access to education; estimates vary but broadly show this has not happened.

Conference Further Believes:

1. "Keep the Cap" is a pathetically weak slogan which fails to express our belief in free education.
2. That the current NUS policy and any attempts to campaign to "Keep the Cap" – are short sighted and concede the powerful moral case for free education for all.
3. Higher Education should be treated as a right not a privilege.
4. Access to education should be equal (and free) for all people, regardless of any artificial/irrelevant distinctions between them, e.g. class, place of birth, race, gender, sexual orientation etc.
5. On a pragmatic level, a campaign to "Keep the Cap" won't be successful. A campaign for completely free education for all may not be entirely successful but will re-orientate the debate in the right direction.
6. Where public money is needed to fund HE it should be raised through general taxation, not fees on students.
7. Variation in fees, on any basis, is unacceptable and goes against the principles of equal opportunities.
8. Education has many positive side effects and should be seen as a good in its self. Campaigning for free access to education should be led by our belief in education for its own sake.
9. Government attempts to justify HE in terms of social mobility, economic benefit or creating "good citizens" are sometimes true but miss the central point of education (see CFB 8).
10. Mass action best demonstrates the strength of student opposition to fees.

Conference Resolves:

1. NUS should fight to restore a strong campaigning national student voice for free education.

2. NUS should campaign on a local level, through individual SUs and national level for fully free education for all – working with other groups that hold similar beliefs.
3. Every available opportunity should be taken by the NEC to speak for free education, lobby politicians & HE sector leaders and press release to local, student and national media.
4. That while this should not become the only campaign the Union works on it should be considered to be a top priority.
5. To organise with student activists, constituent members and other external organisations protests, meetings, rallies etc in favour of free education. These shall include at least one national demonstration, in London, as close to The Palace of Westminster as possible.