

## UCU BRIEFING

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# Opposing the increase in tuition fees

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Members of Parliament are faced with a very clear choice on Thursday 9 December. They can vote for or against an increase in the tuition fee cap. They can vote for or against trebling university fees.

UCU firmly opposes the trebling of tuition fees and does not believe that the system proposed by the government will lead to a fair, well funded, sustainable and world class higher education system. Access to education should be based on ability, not ability to pay.

### KEY POINTS FOR UCU MEMBERS

- Trebling fees will lead to an average student debt of £40,000; the prospect of huge debt will act as a deterrent to accessing higher education for many young people from low income families. Students could be paying for their degrees for 30 years.
- 80% of the university teaching budget has been cut with a complete withdrawal of funding for arts, humanities and social sciences – the cost of delivering these courses is being transferred entirely to students and their families.
- Trebling fees while cutting 80% of public funding from higher education marks the privatisation of the higher education.
- The current proposals will create a market in education – a market always has ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ – those more concerned about debt will be less likely to pay the highest market price for the ‘better’ institutions.

### THE ARGUMENTS

#### **We must get the deficit under control – there is no money left**

The government says they do not want to build a future based on national debt but are planning to saddle students with up to £40,000 personal debt at the start of their careers. These plans do not actually reduce the deficit because thousands more will need to be loaned to students in order to cover the increase in fees.

Higher education contributes almost £60 billion to the economy nationally each year with 2.5% of jobs depending on HE funding.

#### **Students don't have to pay anything up front**

This may be so, but they are still being asked to pay a set fee for each year of their course which will be repayable when they enter the workplace. An average student will end up with £40,000 of debt that could be with them for 30 years. A real rate of interest will be charged from the moment a student takes out a loan.

#### **Graduates won't pay anything until they are earning over £21,000**

Movement in the threshold is certainly welcome but as this threshold won't come into force until 2016, by then it will be a lot less than it sounds.

### **Part-time students will get a better deal**

Much publicised help for part-time students will only benefit the third of part-timers who study 33 percent of a course per year. That third of students may have access to student loans but the majority of students will not have such access and will be forced into paying higher fees under these proposals.

### **ACTION TO TAKE**

- Vote against an increase in fees to £6000/£9000.
  - Write to the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills urging him not to cut teaching funding to higher education institutions.
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