

Higher Education Funding: Free Education A proposal by Andrew Tranter

ICU Notes:

1. Home/EU tuition fees currently stand at £9,000 per annum.
2. That the Higher Education Funding Council for England grant is approximately 29% of what it was in 2009.
3. That this drop in funding has been counterbalanced by increased tuition fees.
4. That this is estimated to save less than £0.5 billion for the country.¹ This is an order of magnitude less than the pre-implementation estimate of £14 billion.²
5. That a 2013 study by the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills³ reports that higher education benefits society in many ways. This includes, but is not nearly limited to:
 - a. The Exchequer's rate of return for the provision of undergraduate degrees, whilst down from 12.1% prior to 2006, stands at approximately 11%
 - b. Around 20% of UK economic growth between 1982 and 2005 came as a *direct* result of increased graduate skills accumulation.
 - c. A 16% increase in those educated to degree level could lead to more than £1bn annual savings in reduced crime costs in the UK.
6. That Free Education is supported by the National Union of Students (NUS) and the University and College Union (UCU), which represents academics working in further and higher education.
7. That France, Germany, Denmark, Sweden and Scotland – to name only a few – have no or tokenistic tuition fees.
8. That several methods of funding free education have been proposed, including a Business Education tax⁴, a Financial Transactions tax, closing tax loopholes or incentivising business contributions to an independent trust.⁵
9. That average graduate debt currently stands at over £44,000.⁶
10. That the ICU higher education funding survey suggested majority support for free education as a short and long term campaigning goal, and criticism of marketisation (see appendix).

ICU Believes:

1. That education is a right, not a privilege.
2. That universities are not businesses. Universities are public services and should be run democratically for the public good.
3. That as such – and considering the huge economic benefits of higher education - universities should be funded by the state, not through tuition fees.
4. That marketisation is already changing the nature of the university – highly paid managers make decisions based on monetary gain, not student welfare. Research is prioritised based on profitability, not scientific worth.
5. That free education is the only system which will reverse marketisation, and it is the only system which does not leave students in absurd amounts of debt.
6. That calling for free education does not prevent us from campaigning pragmatically where necessary, for instance in opposing fee increases.
7. That taking a firm, principled and honest stance is important, particularly in the run-up to a general election.
8. That calling for anything short of free education will only give the government an excuse to raise tuition fees again.

ICU Resolves:

1. To support and actively campaign for free, funded and accessible higher education.
2. To condemn and actively campaign against any attempts to increase tuition fees.
3. To condemn cuts to government funding for higher education, and to actively campaign for a return to pre-2010 levels of government funding.
4. To condemn and actively campaign against the marketisation of higher education.
5. To form links with other pro-free education organisations, including the UCU, NUS and other student unions (particularly within London), in order to effectively implement this policy.

Appendix

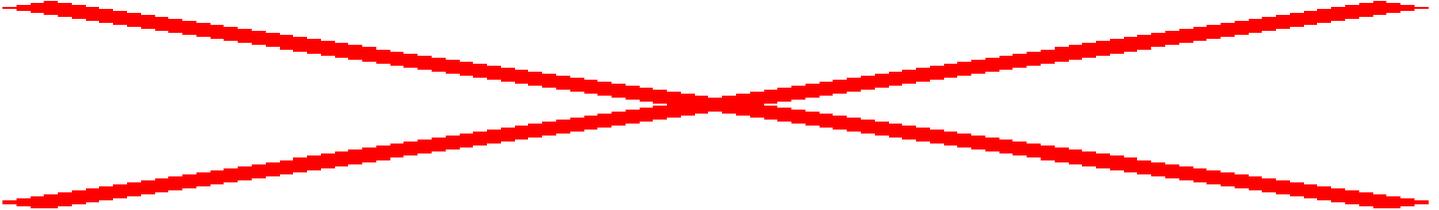


Table 1: From ICU's higher education funding survey. Participants were asked to choose which model should be 1) our preferred model in the long term and 2) our immediate campaign objective.

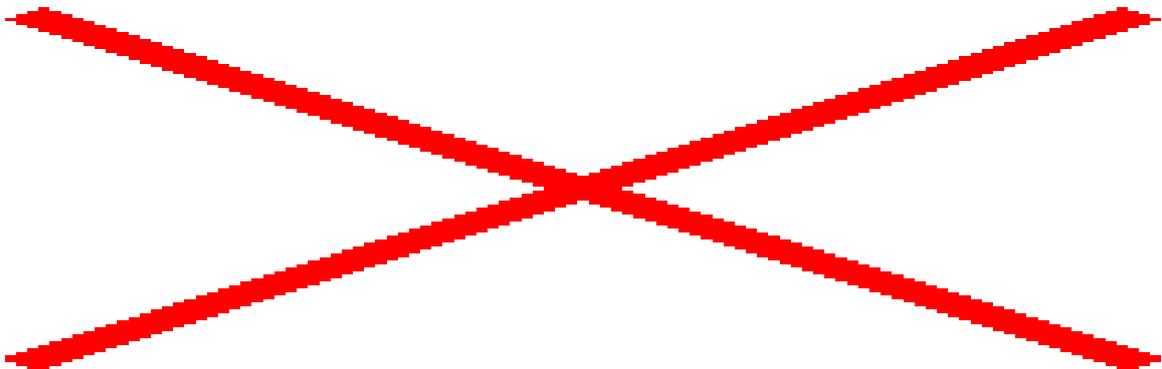


Table 2: From ICU's higher education funding survey. Participants were asked to pick which of the above statements they felt was closest to their own belief.

References

1. Crawford, C., Crawford, R. & Jin, W. (Michelle). *Estimating the public cost of student loans*. (2014). at <<http://www.ifs.org.uk/comms/r94.pdf>>
2. Willets, D. Speech to Universities UK annual conference. (2011).
3. Benefits of participating in higher education: key findings and reports quadrants - Publications - GOV.UK. at <<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/benefits-of-participating-in-higher-education-key-findings-and-reports-quadrants>>
4. *In place of fees: time for a Business Education Tax?*. (UCU/Compass, 2010). at <http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/2/3/inplaceoffees-betax_ucucompass_mar10.pdf>
5. *A Roadmap for Free Education*. (NUS). at <<http://www.nus.org.uk/Global/Roadmap%20for%20Free%20Education%20report.pdf>>
6. Crawford, C. & Jin, W. (Michelle). *Payback time? Student debt and loan repayments: what will the 2012 reforms mean for graduates?*. (2014). at <<http://www.ifs.org.uk/comms/r93.pdf>>